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# EDITOR'S LETTER

## Showing You Care



We all know that one of the keys to success is offering the customer the sort of experience that he or she will transmit to friends. Nothing boosts footfall like word of mouth recommendations. That you sell good quality and original items is almost a given; this will be why the customer has sought you out in the first place. It's what you do with those customers once they are through your doors that makes the difference. We're talking about service, of course. A friendly smile, a remembered name, a willingness to chat, explain or recommend, or even to order something in specially, will often be enthused about to like-minded people – your potential new customers. Good service is all down to the staff you employ. We all know the value of bright, charming and enthusiastic members of staff. People like these can leave a gap when they go. But, given that you operate on a strict budget yourself, how can you retain them without hiking pay?

To begin with, you might remind yourself that it's often not the pay which has attracted them to you anyway. They're here because they like your food, the general ambience of the shop or because they like to deal with people, and there are several ways in which you can give yourself the best chance of retaining such staff longer. People like to feel appreciated, for one. Ensure that training and feedback are part of your routine. Add a personal touch by remembering birthdays and find out what matters to them. Certain days of the year (anniversaries? music festivals?) may need to be kept clear for holidays. Maintain interest by sharing your experience and encourage them to broaden their product knowledge. Several shops I know take their staff on producer visits. Try them out in various roles. This will broaden their knowledge, stop them from getting bored and mean that you have someone who can stand in should another member of staff leave, fall sick or run off with the cheesemaker. The more you train, the more they will get out of their job and the sooner you will have staff you can trust to run the show while you visit one.

> "Maintain interest by sharing your experience"

Ross Gilfillan

ross@aceville.com

# NEWS IN BRIEF

### IRISH EXPORTS SOAR

Figures published by Bord Bia have shown that in 2015 Irish food and drink exports to the UK rose by 7 per cent to €4.4 billion.

Accounting for 41 per cent of Irish food and drink exports, the UK market represents 70 per cent of prepared consumer food exports, 54 per cent of all Irish beef exports and 44 per cent of prepared food exports.

Irish whiskey is the world's fastest growing spirit, with 29 per cent of exports going to the UK.

Simon Coveney, minister for agriculture, food and the marine said, "Irish producers and companies have yet again demonstrated in 2015 their ambition, innovativeness and ability to meet buyer and consumer needs in highly competitive and complex trading environments."

### SCOTLAND'S SPECIALITY FOOD SHOW BIGGEST YET

Scotland's Speciality Food Show, which ran over three days in January, saw a growth in overall attendance of 8.4 per cent, and a 21 per cent growth in exhibitors.

The event – which encompassed Scotland's Trade Fair – offered retailers a chance to discover new products, meet new suppliers and place orders, as well as attend workshops and seminars on subjects including merchandising and PR.

Sue Montgomery from Ardardan Farm Shop said, "The quality and abundance of food and drink on offer at the Show was fantastic and it is encouraging to see so many new products and expanded ranges that we know will appeal to our customers."







# Cumbria: "We're Still Open For Business"

**The speciality food network across the UK is vast – not only is the sector made up of small to medium-sized businesses which are spread out across the nation, but it is growing like never before. A lot of these businesses are dependent on local infrastructures, farmers and fellow producers, and when this delicate supply chain is damaged things begin to unravel fast.**

**We've watched news of the flooding in Cumbria and the surrounding areas with a mixture of pity and panic – how would we cope if the same happened to us? Will this affect our business? Thankfully, support is available for the people and businesses suffering as a result of the floods, and one source of this is Cumbria's Chamber of Commerce. Below, its chief executive shares his thoughts on the current situation. His key message: Cumbria is still open for business.**



**Rob Johnston, chief executive of Cumbria Chamber of Commerce**

We're still trying to understand the scale of the problem. There are businesses who have been directly affected by what's happened, which are quite literally underwater, and there's those who have lost customers as a result of problems with the local infrastructure. There are a few bridges closed and at least one key road has closed, but the region hasn't ground to a halt despite the impression the national press is giving. Yes, there are businesses which have been affected and are going through very difficult times, but people have the impression that Cumbria has in effect closed down – that is not the case. Visitor numbers are falling because of this perception, so effectively we're losing our market as well. It's hitting us in both directions, from the consumers not visiting and buying to the inability of rural businesses to work to their full capabilities.

The businesses we're talking about are very important to their communities, and are a big part of our economy. They may not be the most profitable sector in the area but they are integral to the region's success. The whole supply chain is a concern; we've all worked very hard to get a field to fork concept off the ground, and this is a fragile supply chain – when you're looking at artisan and small-scale producers, anything that breaks that chain is a real issue.

It's quite a threat, and more information is going to come out in the coming weeks – we're currently working on a thousand businesses on recovery plans, which gives you an idea of the scale of the issue. The whole of our economy has been hit, so we at the Chamber of Commerce are desperate to get suffering businesses up and running again and to make them more resilient in case something like this happens again. The area in question falls under both Defra and BIS, so it's worth taking a look at their websites if you'd like to find out more about the support that's being offered.

The message we're trying to give is that for those outside of Cumbria who enjoy our products, particularly the more artisanal and locally-produced items, is to make that little bit of extra effort to get hold of them – a lot of our producers are still trading online, and it's important that they don't lose their customer base at this difficult time. We'll be back up and running as quickly as we can, so please don't assume that producers are unable to fulfil orders. We're in a tricky situation, as on the one hand we want the government to be aware of the challenges that we're facing because we need the support to get back up and running as quickly as possible, but we also can't afford for our customers to think that we're not there as a result of the message the media is spreading.

We're absolutely passionate about Cumbria's food and drink sector, from every size of business, is fundamental to the county – it's part of our DNA. This side of our offering has really grown in the past few years, and now our food and drink is tremendous. It's important that people don't disconnect from that, and that the customer base we've worked so hard to build continues to be loyal and to grow. There are independent retailers outside of Cumbria who stock produce from this region, and we don't want them to assume that because of what they've seen on television that we're not capable of supplying to them. If you are concerned, contact your supplier and make sure. We've known some competitors to the producers in our area be very aggressive, so when they see that a Cumbrian food producer is suffering they call up the retailer to muscle in. That's tough for everybody. A lot of these businesses are marginal and have worked very hard to get where they are, so it's really important from everyone's perspective that they continue to be supported by the supply chain, including retailers.

> "We're absolutely passionate about Cumbria's food and drink sector, from every size of business, is fundamental to the county - it's part of our DNA. It's important that the entire supply chain, including retailers, helps struggling businesses to get back on their feet"



# OPEN FOR BUSINESS

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



### ONLINE DELI OPENS BRICKS AND MORTAR SHOP

**A Belfast-based online deli has opened a bricks and mortar shop in local town Comber in order to showcase the high quality food available in the region.**

Jonathan McDowell, owner said, "It was always a dream to have a bricks and mortar shop – we also really wanted to start expanding into the fantastic cheeses, meats and treats that are made in Ireland which is difficult with the markets and online shop. We opened in Comber, our home town, on the outskirts of Belfast as it has a growing food scene, has a great monthly farmers market and is a surrounded by wonderful products."

The bricks and mortar site stocks around 600 products while the online store stocks around 400, and Jonathan is delighted to now being able to roll out stock chilled and fresh items including Irish cheeses, meats and fish.

The business has a strict focus on Irish products. Jonathan McDowell said, "We are unique in that we ONLY stock 100% Irish products – no one else is doing this and it took 18 months to build the book by touring Ireland and visiting markets and producers the length and breadth of the island. By doing so we have something from each of the 32 counties!"

Events are already a popular aspect of the shop's offering. "We already hold makers events weekly; most recently we hosted local cheese producer (Mike Thomson of Mike's Fancy Cheese) for a brilliant cheese night featuring Irish raw milk cheeses and local craft beers. Mike also comes into the store on Fridays and mongers the raw milk cheeses he has collected from throughout Ireland. We also have an in-house chocolatier: the multi award-winning Benda Fraser of La Coquine. Brenda has a concession area in the store and she also holds chocolate tastings and chocolate making."



### EDGE & SONS PARTNERS WITH DELIFONSECA

**Wirral-based butchers Edge & Son has opened a department within award-winning delicatessen Delifonseca, in order to offer the deli's customers a selection of 'gene to fork' and locally-sourced meat.**

Callum Edge, owner said, "Delifonseca and their commitment, like ourselves, to truly great responsibly sourced food, has always been on our radar as one of the region's finest. When the opportunity arose to join them, we jumped at it!"

"We stock traditional and British rare breed meat from a radius of 25 miles. Nose to tail selection. We say that we are not just farm to fork butchers, but 'gene to fork' butchers. We ensure original British Breed gene pools in our livestock. We believe in slow growing, outdoor and naturally forage fed stock to ensure breadth and depth of flavour that commercial breeds cannot promise. We believe in food production though traditional farming methods and not the factory farming approach."



"Because we buy live and 'on the hoof'; every part of the animal should be available to our customers (within of course the legal food standards framework). We can butcher and prepare cuts to meet our customers' exact needs."

Edge & Son is currently developing a range of oven-ready prepared products. Callum Edge said, "They will be genuine home prepared products from scratch ingredients. No artificial additives or flavourings and no refined sugars."

### BRITAIN'S OLDEST SHOP REOPENS ITS DOORS

**A village store which has been reputed to be Britain's oldest shop has been reopened as a stockist of local produce.**

Selling locally-sourced eggs, vegetables, crisps and meat products, the site has been bought by two local men with a passion for organic and artisan products.

Robin Windmill, co-owner said, "I've lived in Boxford for about nine years, and my passion for a long time has been looking after free-range chickens and selling their eggs. It grew quite drastically in about five years, rescuing chickens and buying pure breed chickens, and the demand for the eggs just grew and grew. At the end of last year, my business partner and I were trialling growing vegetables alongside keeping the chickens. We both have a vision about local and organic products, which has been transferred into the shop."

Community is at the heart of this village enterprise, explains Robin. "When we started we were very conscious of how we could do the best for the community, who were very concerned about the future of the Post Office which had traditionally been inside the shop and were looking for high quality basics. There's a shop across the road which sells Happy Shopper and Booker-style products, and we've been asked to sell the more upmarket items which we're happy to do.




"We sell a local range of pies and pasties which are exceedingly popular, bacon and sausages from the butcher up the road because his quality and reputation is second to none, crisps from the local producer, and produce from a local organic farmer."





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## JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES

# "Christmas trading 2015"

"This is the season to be analysing the Christmas trading figures... So how was it for Partridges in 2015?

2014 had set the previous record so I always knew it would be difficult to beat those figures, which indeed it was. In the shop we ended up by being 1% down on 2014 on a like-for-like basis, although due to better overseas sales the actual result for the 24 days of December ended by being 1% up overall. However, the problem with Christmas is that there are a number of aspects to consider and, like so many things when you run your own business, it's emotional.

The traditional view of Christmas is of partridges in pear trees and reindeer and snow and that customers trade up, which is good news for delis. However, expectations of performance also rise. Christmas is a critical time for food shops. Around 11% of our annual sales happen in December and, as we all know, it is becoming much more competitive, especially with online sales becoming a bigger factor each year.

Another problem with looking at Christmas sales is that individual aspects such as hamper sales, overseas orders, weather and competition from both bricks and clicks can skew the results considerably. Discounting before Christmas, for example, is now a regular feature. However, the suggestion that the Christmas rush comes later and later each year does not seem to apply to us. In 1995 41% of our Christmas sales took place in the last week while in 2015 the figure was 34%.

The individual aspects that affect our figures are as follows: In 1999 there was the millennium spending spree. In 2001- 2003 there was a new multiple in the vicinity. In 2004 we relocated to our new premises. Things went well until 2007 and 2008 when the recession struck. However, in 2009 we bounced – or staggered – back and have had a good run more or less ever since. The only exception being 2013 when one or two large hamper orders went missing.

Christmas trading is still a very good thing, indeed essential. Unfortunately it also brings with it unrealistic expectations of increased sales. It is interesting to note that since 1995 the retail price index has risen by 73% and so all sales increases should be measured against that background. The good years are followed by not so good years, new challenges emerge and to hold on is no mean feat. Although it is not very exciting to say that.

So one can spend hours in an anorak analysing sales figures to possibly no long term benefit or avail. Perhaps the best thing to do is to ride the waves and toast (with a glass of Partridges champagne) the fact that things are going reasonably well.

Except that as I write this it is January and I have given up alcohol for a month. But I am certainly not going to tell the customers that (and especially Francois our wine manager who would never understand why)!

## DIARY DATES

### February

**10th–13th**
BIOFACH
Nuremberg, Germany
**biofach.de**

**10th**
COTSWOLD FAYRE TRADE SHOW
City Temple Conference Centre, Holborn Viaduct
**cotswold-fayre.co.uk**

**10th–11th**
THE SOURCE TRADE SHOW
Westpoint, Exeter
**thesourcetradeshow.co.uk**

**24th–25th**
CASUAL DINING
Business Design Centre, London
**casualdiningshow.co.uk**

**28th–1st**
FARMA CONFERENCE
Queens Hotel, Chester
**farma.org.uk**

**28th–2nd**
SALON DU FROMAGE
Porte de Versailles, Paris
**en.salon-fromage.com**

### March

**1st–3rd**
EXPOWEST CORNWALL
Royal Cornwall Showground, Waybridge
**expowestcornwall.co.uk**

**5th–8th**
OLIO CAPITALE 2016
Trieste, Italy
**oliocapitale.it**

**19th–20th**
ALLERGY & FREE FROM SHOW SCOTLAND
SECC, Glasgow
**allergyshow.co.uk**




# New Look For Springvale Foods

**Springvale Foods, a Suffolk-based distributor of over 2,500 speciality product lines, has rebranded and launched a new website.**

The rebrand follows the company's takeover of Worcester-based Mercia Fine Foods in January 2015 and aims to refresh the brand and move the business forward as one identity.

In the next few weeks the website will include an online shop, where customers will be able to register for an online trade account and view every product in the Springvale Foods brochure, complete with image and pricing.

The distributor's 2016 brochure, which is out now, contains over 550 new products including an increased offering of gluten-free foods. Its gluten-free range now includes over 100 new lines from brands such as Mrs Crimbles, Lovemore, Riverbank Bakery, Glebe Farm, Little Turban, Denise's Delicious Cakes, Farmhouse Biscuits and Free From Italy.

Tim Goody, managing director at Springvale Foods said, "Springvale Foods Ltd is a family-run business, we've been offering unique and exclusive brands to the specialty food sector since 1993.

"Our mission is to source products that bring you added value and a point of difference, and we work hard sourcing innovative products and gifting ranges that inspire all consumers.

"We supply to trade only, and our customers include; farm shops, garden centres, delicatessens, convenience stores and many other independent retailers from across the UK."






# Ludlow Welcomes New MD

**Shropshire-based independent retailer Ludlow Food Centre has appointed Jon Edwards as managing director following former MD Edward Berry's departure in January.**

Prior to the appointment, John Edwards led the retail operation at the award-winning Rhug Estate in Denbighshire, overseeing its expansion into one of the UK's best-known farm shops and champion of local produce. Jon Edwards said, "I am full of admiration for the business model that the Windsor-Clive family has developed to secure a sustainable future for the Estate and the local community. Ludlow Food Centre is very highly regarded so it is a privilege to accept the position of managing director. I am very much looking forward to getting to know our team, local producers and our customers."




David Windsor-Clive, chairman of the Ludlow Food Centre said, "As a family and board, we are delighted to have appointed a new managing director. Jon joins the Food Centre at a very exciting time. We want to build on our achievements and to continue evolving.

"To capitalise on our recent progress we have ambitious plans that Jon will be pivotal in delivering when he joins. His understanding and experience of the retail sector makes him ideal for implementing our plans and will bring a fresh perspective to the business."

# Soil Association Launches Organic Awards

**The Soil Association has launched the BOOM Awards, a celebration of quality,** innovation, creativity and great taste in organic products, retailers and places to eat.

Judged by an independent panel of recognised experts in the food industry, the awards include categories for restaurants, street food and caterers as well as products. A consumer choice award will be open to nominations from the public.

Other categories include cheese; dairy; fresh produce; bakery; confectionery; pantry; meat, fish and poultry and independent retailers.

Any company which has organic as part of their business is encouraged to enter, and there is a discount for Soil Association Certification licensees.

Clare McDermott, business development director at The Soil Association said, ''The BOOMs are a chance to shout about the very best in organic. Independent retailers saw sales of organic grow 5.7% in 2015 and we want the BOOMs to showcase the inspirational entrepreneurs behind this growth.




With over 1,000 new products licensed with Soil Association Certification in 2015 we know that there is fantastic innovation going on in the organic sector.

''The BOOMs will be a great opportunity to showcase products and places to buy and eat organic to the influencers and customers of today. As well as the great awards ceremony at Borough Market with Anna Jones, we'll be holding blogger events to showcase finalists products and providing marketing toolkits to the winners.

''We've had a great response so far and it's time to make some (even more) noise about organic to buyers, customers and media.''

# Biggest Source Show Yet

**The Source trade show opens 10th February, with stand sales currently 20% up on last year.**

Currently the show has 174 exhibitors, 48 of which are doing it for the first time, and 17 of whom are Newcomers who have never done a trade show before.

Exhibitors that have booked in recently include South Hams Brewery, SALSA, Craftis Ltd, St Ewe Free Range Eggs, Proper Cornish and Chesil Smokey. These six exhibitors alone show that the Source trade show really does cover all that you need for your business under one roof – with everything from award-winning beer, free-range eggs, Cornish pasties, and smoked fish to food safety standards, children's activity bags and food distribution/ transport.

The Source trade show takes place at Exeter's Westpoint on Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th February. For more details about the show, to register for your free ticket, or to book your stand, visit the show's website at the sourcetradeshow.co.uk, call 01934 733433, and follow the show @SourceFoodDrink.




# "Back to basics"

February is a particularly sullen month. Wallets are still smarting from Christmas, credit cards sulk and anyone running a restaurant is hanging on for St Val's day in the hope that a dose of spurious romance will kick start the dining year.

Towards the end of last year you could spot some encouraging trends taking their first baby steps. The majority of trends storm out of the kitchen fully fledged and are linked to new kit. Get yourself a Large Green Egg, or a smoke gun, or a water bath, and then you can create the dishes of tomorrow. But surprisingly, our legacy from 2015 is not gadget-driven. It seems that chefs and shopkeepers alike are looking through older material and blowing the dust off those classic cookbooks. The old-fashioned ways have made a quiet comeback. At the 2015 Great Taste Awards the Supreme Champion came from a butcher in Tipperary called James Whelan, and his winning product was beef dripping! About 20 years ago, Jamie Oliver started the fashion for foodies cooking their roast potatoes in goose fat and so claimed a significant advantage in the search for the world's crispiest roast potato. But goose fat is pricey stuff (especially if it must deliver a halfway decent margin), and following extensive trials during the recent Christmas season I can confirm that roasties cooked in beef dripping are superior – beefy, crisp, golden – and for once the old way of doing things is a runaway winner. Could it be that old-fashioned, traditional foods and old-fashioned, traditional kitchen skills may start pointing the way?

Further along the foodie cutting edge you'll come across another anachronism: bone broth. In the days of Escoffier, huge kitchens were dominated by a giant stock pot and the demi-glace it produced was a vital component of classic sticky-rich veal sauces. Now, Japanese restaurants vie to produce the most intense broth for Tonkotsu ramen. An enormous stack of pork bones is cooked for an implausibly long time and delivers an implausibly intense flavour. Making proper stocks takes up a great deal of time, but the benefit is strong, pronounced flavour, as the Japanese know only too well.

Another 're-discovery' of 2015 was the vogue for fermented foods. In the 2010s the Koreans sent us plenty of black and pungent smoked garlic while household utility rooms everywhere rang to exploding bottles of home-made Kombucha (a fresh-tasting, fermented drink from Japan that contains a huge amount of beneficial bacteria. The idea has taken root that massive doses of ''friendly'' bacteria will solve a range of intestinal glitches. Once again this is not a new concept, and most of Europe has been pickling away for centuries.

It may be curmudgeonly but it's hard not to take a satisfaction from pushing the old-fashioned concepts into the limelight. These are not new ideas but they do work well. What's more, you won't need any ultra special, ultra pricey kit – for once, ''being on message'' may be easier than you think.

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## GILES HENSCHEL OF OLIVES ET AL

# "Blue sky thought showers ahead"

Plainly speaking, and after a wet and dry January, I love February. Best month. It's between the maudlin January days of broken resolutions and the sunny days of spring. I've also managed to plough through the self-improvement-business-cobblers books that people think I love getting as Christmas presents – interesting haul this year: Ex Nuclear Submarine Captain Turned Business Guru, Inspiring Speeches of North Korean Nuclear Empowered Leaders and, interestingly, Crap Taxidermy.

And it made me think – our use of language to convey messages and inspire those around us gets really muddied, and we rarely end up saying what we really want to because jargon gets in the way. A recent survey came up with the 50 Most Hated Pieces of Business Jargon and nearly 80% of workers confessed to using at least two pieces of 'cringeworthy office jargon' each day. One chap said: "I hate management speak, but sometimes I open my mouth and guff spews out. I can even hear myself saying it as well – I sound like a complete pillock." I know the feeling.

Here's a fine inspirational business missive that uses some, all or fewer of the Top 50... "Touching base and keeping you in the loop and joining up the re-invented bells and whistles wheel, it's on my radar to drill down and brainstorm our go forward and back to the drawing-board strategic fit. So we need bench-marked blue-sky thinking to circle back to our bottom line and grasp the best practice low hanging fruit for win-win value add customer centric quick wins on a level playing field to get us singing from the same page hymn-sheet for results driven streamlined action plans. That'll put us in the driving seat so we can hit the ground running to play hardball to kick this project into the long grass and get the ball rolling through the moving goalposts smashing this no brainer into the back of the net by close of play. Remember, there's no 'i' in team so if you need to run this up the flagpole let's take it offline and action my open door outside the box idea shower because this off piste project has really got legs. Get with the game plan and ping me an email to get this parked."

Amazeballs. Alas, the more we hear it the more likely we are to adopt it, however unwilling we are to do so. Clearly it's something to preciously guard against lest we become formulaic, impersonal and, frankly, nonsensical.

For a truly great example of inspirational plain speaking, the film Any Given Sunday has one of the best speeches containing not one single piece of management speak – it does contain some fairly cliché ridden stares, squeaks and grunts, but cripes do they convey more than anything written above. So, Jargonistas, here's to a February of plain speaking and, if you find yourself needing to think outside the box, why not just start with a bigger bloody box?



# How to 'Keep It in the Community'

**Local food and drink website bigbarn.co.uk has launched its second annual Make One Change campaign with the aim of encouraging consumers to shop closer to home.**

The campaign's strapline, 'Keep It In the Community', promotes local independent shops and food producers as well as offering consumers the chance to sell their homegrown crops through local retailers in order to support the British food sector.

Founder of bigbarn.co.uk, Anthony Davison, has set up a local food hub in his local village of Alconbury and introduced his nearby corner shop to take part in Crop for the Shop – an initiative which sees local farmers selling their excess produce to local small retailers in order to avoid wastage.

Anthony Davison said, "The aim of Make One Change is to engage with consumers and get them thinking differently about the way they shop for food. For delis and farm shops this means the chance to attract a whole new audience of shoppers during the campaign in May.

"Delis have the opportunity to offer promotional offers to attract new customers and highlight their participation. They can display the logo, mention the campaign online and in-store tell their customers to Make One Change. This year's campaign is focused on keeping shopping in the community, so it's a great time to engage with new local customers."

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DEGENS

# Food Waste

## In Hugh's War on Waste (BBC One, November) campaigning food writer and broadcaster, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall challenged supermarkets drastically to reduce the amount of edible food and produce they waste. Sally-Jayne Wright finds out if the independent and fine food sector is doing its bit

According to the experts, there are four rules to cutting food waste: prevent, reduce, reuse, recycle. Prevention is best and Booths – which has 30 stores across Yorkshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire – has several initiatives. There's a rigorous reduce-to-clear policy on food nearing its use-by date; they bake bread fresh in stores so produce only what is needed; they have short supply chains and constant communication with suppliers. If a grower tells them this season's pears, say, are going to be 'less cosmetic' than usual, they can plan to turn them into prepared fruit.

At the Ludlow Food Centre, Shropshire, which has eight production kitchens, a café, food hall and restaurant, waste prevention is down to planning. A spokesman says, "We order in relatively small batches to our warehouse and each department will plan their production. Our in-house recipe system means that for each batch of product we know exactly how much of each ingredient we'll need."

An innovative way to prevent waste is to stock products which themselves prevent waste. Selfridges and Benedicts deli in Whalley, Lancashire are among the many independents across the UK who stock Rubies in the Rubble chutneys made from fruit and veg that would otherwise be dumped. The success of this social enterprise is not only down to a good story; the recipes are delicious. I particularly enjoyed their slightly runny banana chutney, which is a great match for curry.

There's a rise in so-called conscious consumerism say trend-watchers, JWT Innovation, and people are looking out for products made from discarded by-products of food production. In the States, a company is making artisanal vinegars from a by-product of brewing. If you stock products with a good story, shout about it on your website.

Second rule: reduce. Audit how much you waste and why. Small changes make a big difference e.g. recalibrating ovens so burnt croissants aren't thrown out, ordering meat in ready-cut portions so you waste less on trimmings, or serving fewer chips if customers aren't finishing them. Get every staff member on-side and appoint a food waste champion to gather suggestions.

Third rule: reuse. Booths uses grade-out produce in prepared fruit products. Veg box suppliers, Riverford Organics, turn wonky, damaged and over-sized fruit and veg into meals for their farm restaurant, Islington pub and subsidised staff canteen. Staff take home grade-outs, with free strawberries most popular. Cattle also consume unsaleable produce. Riverford boss Guy Watson says, "Broccoli is their favourite but they are not so keen on oranges. We have to be careful, mind – beetroot makes their milk pink while garlic and onions taint the flavour." At the Ludlow Food Centre, surplus strawberries go to their jam-makers and surplus meat from the butchery to the production kitchens.

Charlie Pears-Wallace at the Northumberland Cheese Company says, "Cheese off-cuts we can't use as cooking cheese in the café become samples at farmers' markets for potential new customers." Local charities will be grateful for food. Booths works with over 15 of them ranging from established food banks such as the Blackpool Food Partnership to community church groups and homeless associations. They freeze unsold bread in store for the groups to collect. Manager, Colin Porter, says, 'Given that many of our stores are in rural locations, it's important to work with local organisations." They would like to work with more but reliability can be an issue. "It's important to find reliable charities who'll regularly turn up to collect the waste."

Final rule: recycle. This should be a last resort. The Ludlow Food Centre's orange peel, potato skins and eggshells are transformed into renewable energy. A local business, Lutra Ltd, collects them twice a week before feeding them through an anaerobic digester and converting them into biogas. The biogas heats Ludlow's on-site digester and is also used towards a local district heating scheme as well as the company owner's Aga oven.



AN ESTIMATED 20 MILLION TONNES OF FOOD IS WASTED IN THE UK EACH YEAR

### DID YOU KNOW

- The UK wastes more food than any other European neighbour – an estimated 20 million tonnes of food at all levels from plough to plate. Retailers throw away at least 400,000 tonnes of this
* Source: Food Cycle

- **Whatever happened to pig-swill?**
Since the foot-and-mouth outbreak of 2001, it has been illegal to feed raw or cooked catering waste to pigs. Campaigners (thepigidea.org) would like this ban overturned but the National Pig Association is against this

- **Most waste occurs in the home**
One way Booths helps prevent this is to offer the option of buying loose fruit and veg. If a customer needs only two carrots, she's not obliged to buy a kilo




# PRIME CUTS

## Paul Buttling, owner of T Buttling Butchers in Dorset, talks us through the story behind the award-winning rural business





**We've been trading since 1978, but the shop was purpose built in 1906 and has been trading as a butchers ever since.** What makes us different to other butchers is that we do things properly – we take the finest possible meats to produce the best end product. We make our own pies, sausages (which we've won numerous awards for), scotch eggs, faggots and burgers, but don't do any ready meals like casserole or stir fry mixes as that's not what our customers want.

> "We do the job properly and honestly – it's that which has kept us going when so many others have been forced to close"



**We're a village butchers so our clientele is rural and tends to prefer the traditional style of butcher products.** We've tried a number of variations on the theme but our customers don't really go for it, so we focus on selling the very best traditional products. On the whole, customers come to us if they want something special. Especially during the festive season – there are some people who we only see once a year at Christmas! I like to think that we do the job properly, to the best of our ability, and we certainly don't go out of our way to cut corners, so people know that they can trust us to sell them a great product.

**We source our meat as locally as we can when possible** – local isn't always the best, though, and it's more important to us to spend however much we need to on a good cut of meat from further afield than to buy lower-quality products from a supplier just because they're local.




**We have the usual bunch of supermarkets around us, including a Tesco about three miles up the road, but we don't worry too much about that as we know that if people want a good piece of meat they come to us.** Obviously some people are on a budget so prefer to buy lower-quality meat from a supermarket, but they know that we're here if they want to treat themselves. We offer a totally different product to the supermarkets, so it's safe to say that our customers are quite discerning. As well as meat we have a deli so sell pâtés and cooked meats including hams which we cook on-site, as well as around 30 different cheeses – some are local, but again we focus on selling a good range of high quality products.

**We're based in a fairly affluent area, so we're able to charge a good price for good products as we don't feel we have to cut corners in order to make a profit.** I'm fourth generation – we originated from a family business in London – and I recognise that we're lucky to still be running in 2015 when so many butchers are closing across the UK.

**It would be interesting to see more young people entering the butchery trade, and we're always happy to take on apprentices.** On the whole, traditional techniques seem to be dying out, but it's fair to say that some cuts would naturally fall by the wayside as tastes and trends change. A product which sold well 50 years ago wouldn't necessarily sell well today. Having said that, some products from that time – including the traditionally cheap ones – are now coming into fashion thanks to people like Jamie Oliver pushing them through his books and television shows. Pork belly, for example, has for a long time been considered a cut that's not too desirable thanks to all the fat in it, but since it's been spoken about in magazines it's become fashionable. Good quality meat may be a growing and trendy sector, but getting into butchery in this day and age is a big undertaking and it's important to do it properly.

# Meat Education Programme Launched

**AHDB Beef & Lamb has unveiled a free-to-use educational resource for the entire meat industry.**

The Meat Education Programme has been developed to offer professionals working in the meat and butchery industries accessible training to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Aimed at all professionals working in the industry, including butchers, retailers, processors, chefs, buyers and counter staff, the resource offers a web-based platform which can be accessed via qsmbeefandlamb.co.uk/mep as well as free theory and practical modules, assessment and certification.

Dick van Leeuwen, business development manager for AHDB Beef & Lamb and project leader of the Meat Education Programme said, "It gives me great pleasure to launch the Meat Education Programme – an extensive and wide-reaching resource developed to add genuine value to the industry.

"We know that it will prove to be a hugely beneficial tool to individuals and businesses – from butchers to chefs – operating within the meat industry, boosting knowledge and skills.

"Not only will the Meat Education Programme enhance industry knowledge, but it will also make it more appealing to newcomers by providing easy access to training and development, with demonstrable accreditation.

"We cannot wait for people to try the programme out and would welcome the opportunity to talk to any business that would like to discuss trialling the programme as an in-house educational resource for staff."







# Taste for Game at All-Time High

**According to research carried out by Mintel, the market wild game is currently growing at a fast pace.**

Wild game meats, including partridge, pheasant, venison, rabbit and duck, are becoming a regular on the plates of British consumers – a growth which has seen Mintel report annual sales rising over £100m.

The report states that by 2020 the forecast will reach $143 million, thanks to one in four Britons consuming game in the past six months and 41 per cent willing to try it in the future.

Jack Knott of the Countryside Alliance's Game To Eat campaign said, "This is a very welcome and over-due recognition of game as a healthy and easy alternative to other meats. As consumers search for increasing reliable and healthy foods, wild game is at the forefront of the market. Butchers are filling their shelves with an increasing number of wild game cuts and ready-meals which allow customers to ease into cooking game, keeping it simple yet tasty."

# OLIVE OIL: KNOW IT, LOVE IT

## Extra virgin olive oil is an essential stocking item for independent food retailers. The 'Olive Oil: Know It, Love It' promotion aims to ensure that retailers have all the information they need to sell olive oil successfully

As an independent food retailer, one of your core products will be a good extra virgin olive oil. This is the sort of premium speciality product which can set you apart from your competition, if you make the right choice of oil. A good knowledge of varieties is important, as is the ability to guide customers in their choices and advise about food matchings. In an age where health concerns are very much to the fore, a firm understanding of the nutritional values and health benefits of extra virgin olive oil is recommended. There are around 1,600 varieties of olives, goes some way towards explaining why individual oils have their own character and identity. Selecting the oil that is right for you can seem like a minefield but, in fact, it all comes down to taste and smell. The appearance of the oil is of secondary importance: be aware that the colour of the oil is not a sign of quality, as a great olive oil may be yellow or green because of a varying percentage of chlorophyll. A bitter taste and pungent aroma is actually a good indicator of an oil with good, health-supporting properties. The aromas are the product of natural antioxidants only to be found in extra





Extra virgin olive oils are produced in three types. Light fruity olive oils offer the delicate aromas of fresh fruit and vegetables and are not overpowered by bitterness or high pungency. These work especially well with seafood appetisers, boiled or steamed fish, delicate vegetables and mayonnaise, for instance. Average fruity olive oils are characterized by slightly stronger fruit and vegetable aromas, and the taste is more pronounced. These offer a good balance of bitterness and pungency and may be used effectively on dishes such as carpaccio, grilled fish, fish risotto, white meat, vegetable soups, grilled vegetables and sauces. Intensely fruity olive oils overflow with those fruity, vegetable aromas and have a strong and definite flavour. Try them with tuna or swordfish, white and red meats, game and bruschetta.

### Storing correctly

Having selected your oils, it is also important that you store them correctly and can advise customers about how to enjoy their purchase in peak condition. Extra virgin olive oil is highly light-sensitive, which is why it is best stored in dark coloured bottles which protect the oil against photo-oxidation. Extra virgin olive oil should be stored at a cool temperature, ideally between 14 to 21 degrees celcius. When cooking, oil should not be left by the heat source. Bottles should be tightly recapped after use, as exposure to oxygen will affect the quality. It is also a good idea to tailor the size of the bottle to your eating habits, as this will help to prevent the oil from oxidizing. Once opened, the oil should be used within one month.

### Versatile

Olive oil is a versatile product. It's the only oil produced by squeezing a fruit and used raw, its vibrant flavours enhance all sorts of foods and salads and makes appetising dips for crudites and artisan breads. Delicate oils should be paired with delicately-flavoured dishes, while the more intense oils better partner more highly-flavoured ones. These rules are not hard and fast and experimenting with different oil/food combinations will pay dividends. Olive oil is the perfect medium for cooking with, because its high smoke point of around 220 degrees celcius preserves the nourishing properties of the food, even when cooked at high temperatures. Used to fry food, a good olive oil will result in a crisp and lightly fried dish.

### Healthy

It's worth emphasizing the health credentials of extra virgin olive oil. Extra virgin olive oil is high in monounsaturated fats – oleic acid helps to lower cholesterol in the blood, contributing to the lowering of blood pressure. It also contains polyphenols, powerful antioxidants which are found only in olive oil and the vitamins E, D, K and pro-vitamin A. The consumption of olive oil aids digestion and helps to absorb calcium. Studies suggest that it also protects the brain, reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

### Join us at Olio Capitale 2016

If you found this article interesting and would like to find out more about olive oil, you can meet experts and producers at the tenth Olio Capitale trade fair, the top quality extra virgin olive oil exhibition, which is held March 5th-8th, in Trieste, Italy. The professional visitors' program offers opportunities to take part in professionally-hosted tasting classes, enjoy show cooking events and taste fine extra virgin olive oils from hundreds of exhibiting producers. There's advice on food matching, too. Whether you are a wholesaler of olive oil, a restaurateur or a retailer looking for exceptional quality and individuality, you will discover a whole new world of extra virgin olive oil at Olio Capitale 2016. For further information and to join the professional visitors' program see oliocapitale.it/knowitloveit mail knowitloveit@oliocapitale.it



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10TH TOP QUALITY EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL EXPO

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Trieste, Italy

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OLIVE OIL: KNOW IT, LOVE IT

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A restaurateur or a retailer?

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# THE INTERVIEW

## Stephen Twining, global ambassador for the iconic tea brand, tells of his past, present and future

**I was born into this industry.** One of my family's traditions is that the next generation has to volunteer to be part of the Twinings business; you have to have a genuine passion and love for wonderful tea. I don't know a Twining who doesn't like tea, but not all of us have a deep passion for it. In my case, it's what gets me out of bed in the morning.

**I wanted to do something a little bit different before I joined the family business, in order to see a bit more of the world and how it worked, so I worked in the financial services industry for a while, then was lucky enough to get the opportunity to work for a firm of tea brokers in London and attended tea auctions – this was fascinating and stood me in good stead. I joined Twinings as a business in 1985.** I've worked in most professional functions during my time at Twinings – in sales, marketing both in the UK and internationally, and with the tea tasters. I'm certainly not a qualified tea taster, but working in this department gave me a strong appreciation of the skills they have and the work they do. I've also worked in the manufacturing side of things and can work a tea bag machine, so I'd say I do have an all-round understanding of how the business works, which is invaluable.

**It's my role to open people's eyes to the immensely complex world of tea's fabulous flavours.** On my business card I'm described as the director of corporate relations, which really means I'm the glorified global ambassador to the company. Certainly, when I joined back in 1985, most people weren't as discerning as they are now – tea was simply an accompaniment to a cake or a ham sandwich, whereas now people ask specifically for a Ceylon or an English Breakfast blend. Tea drinkers generally are much more aware of the choices to them and what they like, which is great.

**One of the biggest trends at the moment is personalisation, and tea is ideal for that – you can stick a bag of Earl Grey and English Breakfast in the same teapot and change both those tastes to create a blend which you enjoy drinking.** Taste is a very personal thing, so I certainly wouldn't expect everybody to follow my tea drinking day. I need a stronger cup in the morning so an Assam or an English Breakfast to get the blood going, then when I reach the office I have a Ceylon which is a bright, lighter tea. I then move into more delicate teas, so by 11am I'm almost certainly drinking Darjeeling, and come lunchtime Earl Grey or Lady Grey is the perfect after-lunch cuppa. In the afternoon it's a free for all, and my decision tends to be dependent on the weather. On sunny days I tend to go for light teas like Lapsang Soushong, then after dinner a green or peppermint tea. It adds up to between 10 and 15 cups of tea per day.

**The beauty of tea is that it doesn't have just one taste – there's a cornucopia of flavours out there.** A cup of tea has one job – to please the drinker – and it can be personalised to the drinker's taste.

**People who inspire me are those who have specialist knowledge and craftsmen, for example our master blenders.** It takes a lifetime of commitment to become a master blender, at least twenty years of tea-tasting experience. To put this into context, it takes a whole five years to become a useful tea buyer from being an assistant buyer. Tea is immensely complex, and the best way to explain it is by using wine as an analogy – consider the fact that if you go back to the same vineyard year after year to buy your favourite wine, it's going to be different every time as there'll be a fluctuation in taste due to the weather. Tea is harvested in seasons and in some areas of the world all year round, but every time you go back to the same bushes the flavour of the tea will have altered. The job of our master blenders is to blend them together to recreate the taste you had last time; wine drinkers accept a difference in taste, while tea drinkers don't. It's a huge skill to create a consistent tea product.

**The opportunity to make a difference and to make things better is what gets me out of bed in the morning.** Twinings was set up with a great philosophy by Thomas Twining 309 years ago, and that was to do one thing and one thing well – which is buying and blending fine quality teas. We don't want to deviate from that, and we haven't, but it is then the challenge of keeping up with trends. At the moment we have 400 blends of tea, and if we need to go to 600 that's absolutely fine, so long as we're delivering the cups of tea that our customers want. I want to invite more people to drink tea, and we're doing this by challenging ourselves to do things better and, if possible, quicker than we have done thus far.

### QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

**PERSONAL MANTRA**

**People do business with people – I've always found that this is the case, and it absolutely makes a difference. I'm never happier than when I'm talking directly to people who are interested in tea.**

**ROYAL WARRANT**

**Twinings is Royal Warranted, and the holders have a charity they started some 25 years ago called QUEST (Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust) which gives scholarships and support to craftsmen and designers across the UK in all different spheres of industry. These people always inspire me with their dedication and skill, and so we're delighted to be associated with them.**

**MEETING EXPECTATIONS**

**The most important thing I've learned in my time in the sector is to always plan for tomorrow and talk to people. That is imperative when it comes to discovering new trends and what the consumer is looking for. Rich indulgent flavours are what people seem to want at the moment, and the next stage involves talking to our experts in order to meet their expectations.**

> “Tea is a lot more complicated than its simple, three-lettered name suggests”

### MAKING IT WORK

**Twinings is very fortunate to recruit people who are truly passionate about tea, which ultimately leads to customer retention – passionate employees go the extra mile, which customers enjoy and appreciate, then return.** We have absolute experts working at Twining, including our nine master tea blenders who collectively have an incredible knowledge of the world of tea. I'm still learning about the raw materials we use and have a real thirst for knowledge about trends and how to do things better. Delivering on that takes some doing!

**If you follow which supermarkets are doing well, Waitrose and the discounters are thriving – people are visiting various shops to get all the things they need, all the while 'self-gifting' and buying affordable luxuries for themselves and their families.** Certainly since 2008, big ticket items have not been selling so fast so certain sectors have been suffering, though I think we're going to see those items coming back. People are going to continue to buy affordable treats. When your tastebuds are opened up and you come across a great-tasting tea you really love for an affordable price, you're not going to step back and think 'I'm saving up for a new fridge so I'll put that tea back,' because I think that our nation is financially on the mend.

**I think independent retailers will continue to do well, regardless of the nation's financial situation.** It's the specialist knowledge of their products and the personal service which counts for a great deal. Their customers count on them to source something great. The expertise of people in this trade always impresses me, not only of the products they're selling in their shop but also of the industry.

**My work in this industry is not over yet, and there are many more people I need to get my message out to.** It's about continuously talking to people, understanding what their needs are and what they want, and finding a way to get that to them.

# When it comes to chocolate, the future is functional says Daisy Phillipson

Confectionery might not be the first thing you would think of when looking for functionality. After all, isn't chocolate meant for a bit of naughty indulgence? The sugar, the cocoa, the milk; they all add up to make a mischievous yet incredibly enjoyable treat.

Yet now it seems, as the health market continues to mature, that consumers are demanding that even their sweet treats offer some sort of nutritional benefit.

Functional confectionery tends to include some sort of ingredient that provides the item with a genuine health attribute. This can be through organic claims, added protein or antioxidants.

Due to the nature of confectionery and its taste benefits, the sky really is the limit. Chocolate is a great vehicle for ingredients as the powerful cocoa flavour can mask the foul tastes of some superfoods. And with changing consumption habits resulting from health-attentive consumers, the increase in these sorts of ingredients is likely to assist with functional confectionery sales.

## Protein claims

One area that Douglas Faughnan, senior food and drink analyst at Mintel, says has definite growth potential in the UK is chocolate with high-protein claims.

In 2013, 1% of new launches carried a high-protein claim on pack, and this figure has risen to 1.5% in 2014 and 2.4% in 2015. That's quite a jump.



Douglas explains that categories with foods that naturally contain high levels of protein, such as dairy and meat, account for a high proportion of high-protein launches, "however, more than half (56%) of British chocolate eaters are interested in high-protein snack bars in the style of their favourite chocolate." This shows the significant potential for niche chocolate producers to provide consumers with protein-filled post-gym bars. The reason for the low level of launches in this sector, says Douglas, are the regulations on high-protein claims in the EU. "Products that claim to be a source of protein (or similar) must derive at least 12% of their energy value from protein, while for a high-protein (or similar) claim, that rises to 20%. High-calorie products thus typically struggle to make such claims."

While similar requirements are in the place in the US, some chocolate brands have approached protein claims in a less direct way by incorporating ingredients with high protein content such as almonds or goji berries. These provide examples of how UK manufacturers could tap into this popular market segment. "Chocolate brands in the UK could adopt a similar approach, incorporating ingredients that are widely associated with being high in protein and referencing these," says Douglas.

An example of these products is Wild Ophelia All Natural Salted Almond chocolate bars, which contain nutrient and protein-enriched nuts. Alternatively, brands could follow the lead of Icelandic confectionery manufacturer Nói Síríus, which launched its Aktiv Proteinbitar bite-sized pieces in 2014. The bites comprise 56% dark chocolate and 20% isolated whey protein to allow for a protein content of 20g per 100g. Douglas states that the company claims this addresses the inferior taste, which is a common problem of high-protein products.

## Flavanols

What about confectionery with claims not related to protein? Another healthy inclusion is ingredients with antioxidants.

Natural and rich cocoa and cacao powder is becoming increasingly recognised for its nutritional benefits. Flavanoids are a naturally occurring chemical compound found in plants and they help with disease prevention, including heart problems, cancer and stroke. They have also been found to assist with memory retention.

Chocolate producer Q-91 Functional Chocolate has utilised this knowledge by producing super-dark, bittersweet premium chocolate that is high in cocoa mass. Combining low sugar content and high flavanols, the product promotes the added benefits that can be derived from its consumption. According to Nicole Heremans, PR coordinator for Barry Callebaut, "cocoa flavanols help to rejuvenate the cardiovascular system by maintaining blood vessel elasticity. Combined with a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle, this is very important in maintaining a healthy quality of life. The health effect of cocoa flavanols has been proven according to the European Food Safety Authority, and is only the fourth health claim in Europe assigned to a food company."

With the rise in consumer knowledge surrounding flavanols, it is likely that more and more products released onto the market that carry the labelling that outlines the use of specially developed cocoa powder.

## Potential"

With huge cocoa producers such as Barry Callebaut and Cémoi now developing these specialised cocoa powders, this clearly outlines that there is space in the market for functional chocolate.

Douglas from Mintel expresses similar views as he discusses the potential for cobranding. He says, "another route for operators to reach the 56% of British chocolate eaters interested in high-protein bars in the style of their favourite chocolate could be cobranding.

"A tie-up with a chocolate brand could help these operators to reach a wider audience and boost their credentials on taste."

And with government set to increase regulation on unhealthy ingredients due to the costs on public health, functionality could be the answer to this – to provide a nutritionally beneficial snack that doubles up as a sweet treat.









# FARMA CONFERENCE **2016**

## Taking place 28th February – 1st March, the second annual FARMA conference is a valuable resource for your farm retail needs

### 28th February

**Moveable Feast** – three courses at three top restaurants across Chester, including Italian cuisine from The Yard, contemporary dishes at Luke's Eating House and Gin Rickeys, French chic at Chez Jules and social dining at The Hollows.

### 29th February

**Farm Retail Tours** – an interactive opportunity for those looking to enter the farm retail sector as well as established shop owners, managers and staff to visit inspirational farm shops and other retail businesses. Farm Retail Bus Tours are visits to three impressive retailing businesses, offering inspiration on classic retailing, holding events and becoming a local attraction.

#### TOUR 1 – RETAIL & DETAIL

**Bodnant Welsh Food Centre**
This award-winning independent retailer located in the stunning Conwy Valley offers a true taste of Wales and an inspirational look into a growing business. The Centre includes a farm shop which produces its own cakes, savouries, ice cream, butter and cheese, a cookery school, luxury accommodation, and the Furnace tearoom and Hayloft restaurant.

**Rhug Organic Farm**
From beginnings as a tourist-attracting portakabin business, this estate-run has transformed into a stunning organic farm shop. Supplying its own beef, lamb, chickens, geese and wild bison, this impressive retailer has added to its portfolio with the Bison Grill Bistro.

**Bellis Brothers, Wrexham**
A strawberry-centric Dee Valley farm shop and garden centre, which has grown extensively since its former incarnation as an extensive PYO business.

#### TOUR 2 – EVENT RETAILING

**Cheshire Farm Ice Cream**
The most-visited 'free to enter' attraction of its kind in the North West, The Ice Cream Farm attracts over half a million visitors a year. Opened in response to consumers wanting to visit the farm on which the Fell family created its award-winning ice cream, the site is a valuable example of dramatic expansion.

**Chester Zoo**
The retail manager of this successful enterprise will demonstrate how catering and retail can be used to help release extra retail spend from each and every customer.

**The Hollies Farm Shop**
One of the best farm shops in the North West, which grew from humble beginnings – a vegetable stand and honesty box on the side of the road. The owners credit great food and fantastic customer service as being key to the venture's success; during your visit, learn how these key elements to the business affect footfall and spend.

#### TOUR 3 – RETAILING THROUGH CATERING

**Bashall Barn**
Food and events play a substantial part in the successful running of this retailer, but the man behind it still finds time to run a busy farm shop, restaurant and wedding venue, as well as produce his own ice cream and frequently run evening events. Discover how he makes it work on this tour.

**Red House Farm**
Large tea rooms, outdoor seating areas, a summer maize maze and up to 12 parties each weekend – just a handful of talking points that make Red House Farm stand out from the crowd. During your visit, you will learn how to cope with this variable money spinner.

**Huntley's Country Stores**
A focus on their own meat, a true appreciation for value for money and an open mind have seen Huntley's develop from a food hall and restaurant develop into a full retail complex – find out how they make it work.

**The FARMA Awards**
An annual celebration of farm retail excellence, the awards evening is an opportunity to meet like-minded people in the sector and be inspired by the very best farm retailers.

### 1st March

**Conference** – a plethora of speakers will be sharing their experience at the conference, including Philip Graves, who will shed light on how your customers think; Nigel Bogel, speaking about fostering customer loyalty; Jonathan Winchester, talking about servicing your customer and Tim Bennett of the Food Standards Agency on food legislation. William Chase, founder of Tyrrells Crisps and Chase Distillery, will also be speaking at the event, giving a 'warts and all' talk about his success created by the humble potato

**Trade Show** – an opportunity to forge new professional relationships and develop your business, at this new-format event running alongside the Conference. Associate members and new suppliers will be in attendance, from businesses covering product and retail services to packaging solutions and EPOS systems. If you would like to book a stand, please email info@farma.co.uk but please note that a first come first served policy is in place due to space restraints.

**Butchery Competition** – the event will see the second annual butchery competition run in a partnership with AHDB Beef and Lamb, offering a valuable opportunity to meet with Michael Richardson, direct retail specialist at AHDB Beef and Lamb. The competition will see some of the best farm shop butchery teams from across the UK demonstrate their understanding of meat, knife skills and ability to add value. Please contact FARMA via info@farma.co.uk for further details if you would like to take part.

### IN DETAIL

**WHAT:** The FARMA Conference
**WHERE:** The Queens Hotel, Chester, CH1 3AH
**WHEN:** 28th February-1st March
**EMAIL:** info@farma.co.uk
**WEB:** farma.org.uk/farma-conference





# Cheese Talk

New retail perspectives from industry experts



## JULIET HARBUTT

# "Young vs old"

When I started Jeroboams in the late 80s, working in a cheese shop didn't have the cache it has now – I remember advertising in the Evening Standard and getting just one reply! Now, not a week goes by that I don't have someone wanting to know how to start a career in cheese or to start a cheese shop or deli. However, the problems of motivating and inspiring your staff have not changed.

Two friends of mine started jobs in food retailing just before Christmas. One, in her early 50s and who I shall call Sally, had worked in a high powered marketing job before she started her family and took a position on the shop floor in a successful farm shop. The other, Rosie, 25 and a graduate, was offered a three month position in a London deli.

Both ended up bending my ear about how abysmal the training was, and how the people managing them appeared to have virtually no training in how to manage people and were rude, disrespectful, thoughtless and made everyone's lives a misery.

Both had made it clear they were just looking to fill in time and earn some extra money, but they are confident, well travelled and articulate, and thought they had something to offer and that it would be fun. Like most people they imagine food retail is about chatting to customers, helping them choose something delicious, getting to know the other staff and generally being helpful, liked and respected by all. They had no idea that there was anything to do before the shop opened or after it closed, so from the beginning there was the potential for disappointment and resentment.

Sally wanted a job that would fit around family commitments and allow her to use her skills of communication and experience of selling, but as many of her friends shopped there she wanted to avoid wearing "those ridiculous hats" or tie her hair back, so asked if she could work in the non-food area. On her first day she was reduced to tears by the young manager who told her to "get a grip" and put the hat on. She consequently spent the next month running for cover whenever she saw someone she knew.

I admit that Sally is fairly opinionated, but she is a grafter and like most of us if asked to do something politely, even if it seems unnecessary, will do it. But her young manager showed her little respect; I saw this first-hand and cringed at the way she put her down and spoke to her.

The problem is lack of training or support given to young managers. At 30, she had the job because she has been there longest, but she needs to understand how to manage people, especially older staff, and her manager treats her in a similar way!

Rosie is bubbly, keen to please, talk-to-anyone-do-anything and just wants to feel part of a team. She received very good product training and was young enough for the lack of praise and occasional bollocking to slide off her, but no one ever explained the basics of retailing such as stock control and best practice. When it came to time off I used to say, "I will be flexible if you will be," and I hope I stuck to that because both Sally and Rosie discovered, despite being told that requests made in advance would if possible be respected, that their requests were virtually ignored. Rosie missed the last train out of London on Christmas Eve and her brother had to detour 200 miles to pick her up. Sally asked if she could swap days so she could go on a skiing holiday with her family early January, but on December 19th was told it was an unreasonable request and it was turned down. The holiday had already been booked!

> "You can never tell your staff everything they need to know – they need to learn the basics then apply that to different situations"

Endless stocking and restocking of shelves and changing displays seemed ridiculous to Rosie when they were so busy. Sally was appalled to find she barely had time to go to the loo, the kitchen never seemed to cook what people wanted (if only we knew!) and that she was meant to get customers to buy food with the shortest date. I had to laugh when she told me she was telling people to buy the youngest Christmas cakes and Christmas puddings, not understanding the longer they age the better.

Your staff need to understand the importance of stock rotation, what the difference is between 'best by' and 'use by' dates, and when something should or shouldn't be sold. You can never tell your staff everything they need to know – they need to learn the basics and then they can apply that to different situations. I used to tell my staff that the best rule to use was "if you wouldn't sell it to your mother, don't sell it to my customers" – this meant that if I wasn't there or they weren't sure then they could apply this rule.

And please take time to train the young managers; if they are being aggressive or disrespectful, it is more than likely because they lack confidence and are afraid to get things wrong – which makes the best of us a bit grumpy.



## GEORGE PAUL OF BRADBURY'S

# "Telling the story"

It has never been more fashionable for the media to feature artisan and small cheesemakers than it is right now. A fairly steady stream of journalists tour the UK looking to capture that interest story for magazines, trade journals, internet and the jewel in the crown, TV.

In recent months and years, travel programmes, an endless diet of cookery programmes and local and national farming programmes have given great exposure to British cheese, and a few Continentals too.

The question: could the individual maker do more to give themselves higher exposure? The answer: of course they can. Marketing oneself is an everyday task, and if done, it's best done well and regularly.

Going back 20 years, a lot of the exposure of artisan and speciality cheese types was done by the distributors, including Bradbury's, Rowcliffe's and Cheese Cellar, often bringing the products to market. Beyond that, a vast array of great retailers – too many to reference – gave great local exposure to both classic and innovative types that brought both consumer and media recognition.

Certainly on an international scale, Neal's Yard became a real beacon for media recognition of artisan cheese and great mutual benefit accrued to all stakeholders.

Many of the makers have taken on the challenge of creating their own identity, largely using the internet, with varying degrees of professionalism, and a few have used it as a route to market, which is a fairly logical approach, especially where there is a high dependency on farmers' market sales.

Mediums such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook have allowed the consumer greater access to small artisan businesses and a level of interaction with the makers themselves which has been unparalleled.

Probably the most polished of these communications is that of Mary Quicke and her Dairy Diary, which is without doubt an unrivalled piece of stylish marketing that few if anyone could match for both eloquence and country feel. It's magical.

There are some conflict lines that hinder this all-out marketing drive, and they largely centre around the varying strands of routes to market.

Many makers have a mixed economy of customers, including direct independent retail, catering, wholesale distribution, export and major retail, and this uneasy cocktail of differing approaches can obscure action that might be perceived as favouring one sector over another.

In essence, some sectors provide a better income margin while others provide volume, and it's this delicate balance that many makers try to strike. It's this which often keeps them lower profile than they could be, maintaining dependency on a key number of customers.

There are non-conflicting approaches that most makers could and should use. Addressing the consumer and media directly is not in conflict with serving their distributive accounts, indeed doing so may well contribute substantially.

The consumer is thirsting for knowledge about artisan cheese, not just for the history and flowery words of luscious pastures and herby tastes, but simply what to use it for. It's often as simple as that. A James Martin recipe on Lincolnshire Poacher clears shelves within hours; do we need more evidence?

Use serving suggestions as a marketing tool, and serve complementary products like wine, cider and even gin to make it more modern and relevant. E-commerce may well be regarded by some as being in conflict with the established distributive channels, but it's here, it's now, and it's growing. A fixed weight option there would open the doors to a high income, complementary market to reach those areas others can't.

Telling the story is fine on the web, but some clever printed material incorporating, say, a unique recipe sent via post or online will keep a brand in eyeline. It does not need to be expensive, but it is necessary to think about how one wishes to be seen – traditional, modern, creative – as you are what you appear, and I have always thought a good label design and a consistent style is never money wasted. This is brand value, it's what the media likes, and there's room for all.

Great British artisan cheesemakers are often modest in the extreme, resist projecting themselves except when necessity drives, and thus take slightly longer than necessary to obtain the overnight success they deserve.

All in this trade know, or should know, how hard artisan cheesemaking is and that you don't get everything first time you ask. Keep on asking, keep on telling, keep on selling.

> "E-commerce is regarded by some as being in conflict with the established distributive channels, but it's here, it's now and it's growing"

News, opinion and comment from dairy insiders

## HOW TO: CHEESE OF THE MONTH



**Ros Windsor, managing director of Paxton & Whitfield gives us an insight into the retailer's Cheese of the Month concept.**

I've been with Paxton & Whitfield for over 10 years now, and during that time the artisan cheesemaking industry has grown in terms of size and the number of really exciting and interesting cheeses that consumers can enjoy.

Our 'Cheese of the Month' grew from wanting to ring the changes in-store by promoting new and different cheeses on our counter and also to engage with our team to learn more interesting facts about some of our cheeses. It also gave us an opportunity to ensure we had matched the cheese with some of our other fine food products and promote them too.

We produced an annual calendar and championed one cheese a month. In terms of the criteria for picking the cheese we looked at areas that included seasonality, newness, was it an award-winning cheese, was there a calendar date we could tie it into – e.g. Bastille Day for a French cheese – and did it have an interesting story.

It's a simple premise but one that has helped us engage with our customers, highlighted the great assortment we stock and also enabled us to promote some overlooked cheesemakers.

Fast forward to 2016 and with the development of our website, the growth of our business and the changing promotional/marketing landscape in terms of the expansion of social media, we've adapted the activity and today use it across the whole business. We realized that we'd invested the time in creating the calendar and the content, so wanted to make it work harder.

Today we use the selected cheese in our PR activity, we highlight it on our website, we talk about it in our newsletters to customers, we share it on our social media channels (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook), we promote the cheese in our shops and we use it in our monthly Cheese Society subscription club.



EACH MONTH, PAXTON & WHITFIELD CHOOSE A CHEESE FROM ITS EXTENSIVE RANGE TO PROMOTE



BARWHEYS: PAXTON & WHITFIELD'S CHEESE OF THE MONTH

What does the activity achieve for us in terms of results? From this simple idea we've found the following:

**ENGAGEMENT:**
It's a great engagement tool for the teams in our shops. We have the relevant cheese promoted on our counters for a period of time during that month. The teams taste it and learn about its provenance and flavour to then engage customers.

**SALES:**
We've achieved sales off this activity – with the cheeses and also specially chosen complementary products, e.g. biscuits and chutneys.

**AWARENESS:**
Through promoting it via press releases it gives us consistent contact with the media on interesting products and the stories behind them.

**CROSS-PLATFORM CONTENT:**
A buzz phrase in today's marketing industry is 'creating interesting content shared across multiple platforms'. This activity achieves this and also helps us in terms of our time when shared across social media, the website and our newsletter.



## Mary Quicke Welcomed to La Guilde

**Mary Quicke, cheesemaker and managing director at Quicke's Traditional, was unexpectedly inaugurated into La Guilde Internationale des Fromagers at the Fancy Food Show in San Francisco in January.**

La Guilde Internationale des Fromagers operates across 33 countries internationally, and is made up of over 6,000 dairy farmers, professional cheesemakers, processors, retailers, traders and refiners.

Mary Quicke's new title is in recognition of her lifelong dedication to cheesemaking and farming, in line with La Guilde's promotion of the hard work of those involved in the dairy industry.

Mary Quicke said, ''The Fancy Food Show always throws up surprises but I really wasn't expecting this! La Guilde Internationale des Fromagers is enormously respected throughout the industry and to have been selected to join their members is really quite astonishing and an enormous privilege.

''It is also an opportunity to further spread the word about my passions as a cheesemaker and all the issues that matter to Quicke's and other British dairies.''



# In Memoriam:
## John Beckett, Belton Cheese



**John Beckett, director and former chairman of family-run business Belton Cheese, has passed away following a long career in the agricultural industry.**

Throughout his distinguished career he championed the dairy industry, working as president of the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers (RABDF) and Chairman of Cheshire Country Landowners Association, as well as chairman of NWF Group for 11 years.

In 1994 John was named chairman of Genus, and seven years later the business had transformed to become the biggest breeding company in the world and was trading in 70 countries – testament to his hard work and dedication.

This dedication was mirrored in his passion for helping young people develop within the industry, sharing with them the knowledge of business and management he thought necessary to allow farmers to compete on equal terms. To assist in this mission and to benefit generations to come, John established the MBA Agrifarm Charitable Fund – administered by The Worshipful Company of Farmers – to enable farmers to study for an MBA at the Cranfield School of Management. He also worked as chairman of Farmhouse Cheesemakers Ltd, Goodwins Cheese Ltd, The 300 Cow Club and M K Richmond Ltd John Deere dealership, an honorary fellow of the Agricultural Society of England, and a liveryman of The Worshipful Company of Farmers.

John's services to the industry were recognised in 2012 when he was presented with the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers' Princess Royal Award, and in 2013 this accolade was followed by the RASE's National Agricultural Award.

A Service of Thanksgiving is to be held at St. Alkmunds's Church in Whitchurch, Shropshire at 12 noon on 18th March 2016.

Justin Beckett, MD said, ''My father's passing is a huge loss for all the family and those worked with him in the business, but we take comfort from the tributes and letters that have poured in. He was a hugely loved and respected man who will be sorely missed by everyone who was lucky enough to ever meet him.''

# Džiugas cheese offers the next step for mature cheese fans

**Mature cheese sales continue to blossom, with 4.3% growth in 2015 (Kanter Worldpanel 52 w to 11/10/2015)**. But where will the mature cheese fan look next and where will cheese retailers go to optimise this trend? Džiugas, the cheese from the Baltics, is presenting itself as the answer and with 800 tonnes sold annually, it appears to be a convincing argument.

The Lithuanian cheese makers at Džiugas have a real track record in successfully producing a mature cheese that is a delight on the palate. The younger Džiugas lines (Mild 12 and Piquant 18) are already mature by cheddar standards but are smoother and subtler in their taste. The older varieties (Delicate 24 and Gourmet 36) bring the recognisable qualities of a mature cheese into play. They have a crystalline crunch,but without the acidic back bite of a typical hard well-aged English or Italian cheese. The Piquant and




Gourmet lines also retain the caramel hints that are reflective of older hard Dutch cheese, without being cloying.

Džiugas is gaining reputation and recognition in the UK. It is keen to seek out additional retail partners in order to complete a national network around the existing retail base. It is no coincidence that there are strongholds in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh where there are large Eastern European population clusters. These areas have been important in establishing the brand and bringing it to the attention of a wider audience of mature cheese fans.

For more information regarding Džiugas in the UK please contact dziugas@clear-group.co.uk or visit dziugashouse.lt.

# Un-named Cheese Wins International Award



**Dorset-based cheesemaker Ford Farms has won a gold medal at the World Cheese Awards for a cheese without a name, having competed against 2,727 cheese producers worldwide.**

The producer won a multitude of awards at the event, more than were presented to any other British cheesemaker, including another gold for its popular Wookey Hole Cave Aged Cheddar.

The cheese in question is a sheep's milk cheese, the idea of which came Ford Farm's director's regular trips to Spain. Mike Pullin, director was inspired to create a cheese similar to Manchego, and so traditional Cheddar-making methods were employed using the milk from local Polled Dorsets and Frieslands.

The nearly entirely handmade cheeses were matured in cheese cloth for around six months, the typical ageing term for a Manchego cheese.

Martin Crabb, operations director at Ford Farm said, ''We won seven medals in total, but the one we received for our unnamed cheese was a great surprise. In my opinion, it won because it's unmistakably a sheep's milk cheese but is incredibly fresh-tasting with a clean flavour.

''It won this award when it was five months old, and is available for independent retailers to stock.

''This cheese seems to have hit the mark with its distinctive butterscotch colour, its sweet, lingering taste as well as its crumbly texture, and we are delighted to have received this accolade.''



JUSTIN TUNSTALL
RETAIL CONSULTANT

## "Keeping it Fresh"

When we have a winning formula, we can be resistant to changing it. There's an often quoted two year time period during which new businesses will succeed – or fail. Received wisdom says that if you are still trading after 24 months, then the enterprise probably 'has legs'. At this point, with workable cashflow and reliable turnover from a solid customer base, it's tempting to hunker down and just get on with running the business as efficiently as possible, crossing our fingers and hoping for organic growth. But that way, danger lies.

A good cheese counter should always carry a solid core of staples – your classic hits: perhaps regional specialities and continental 'must-haves' – and the majority of sales and profit come from those lines. Fine for visitors and occasional shoppers from some distance, but to continually engage your most loyal shoppers, you will undoubtedly need to inject some regular variety into the offering. A weekly shopper reliably started each visit to our shop with ''What's new?''. Sometimes I would deflect the question with the assertion that a particular (regular) cheese was particularly good at the moment, but his approach gave a necessary spur to innovate.

Perhaps the best (and safest) way to introduce a guest cheese is to respond to a customer request. If someone asks you for a cheese that you wouldn't normally stock, take their contact details and consider listing it as one of the next 'cheeses of the month'. Giving a customer a call to say that their favourite is now 'in' is great for building customer rapport, and they'll usually take a sizeable piece to get that that cheese's sales underway. Sometimes it can pay to agree with them in advance to take 500g or so from a large cheese about which you are uncertain. Stocking new award-winners can be useful – as can monitoring what's being talked about in magazines such as this. Setting up a 'one-off' direct supply from an interesting artisan producer can be great for both parties. Consider resting a line that you usually stock, just for a week or two. This can stimulate greater desire for that line from its fans and create a little space in the shelf.

Any effort put into refreshing the offering comes to naught if you and your staff don't know the story behind the cheese. To sell a new item successfully, we have to enthuse our customers with its provenance and, most importantly, where it fits into a cheese selection. We make sure that every new cheese is tasted by each staff member before they start selling it. We also discuss what accompaniments to suggest with it – having an up-selling suggestion ready can really add to the takings!

As much as a refreshed cheese list will engage and interest customers, there's an even greater benefit for the team of cheesemongers. Having a new cheese about which to enthuse is the very reason I love selling cheese. Apparently Stones drummer Charlie Watts relishes the challenge of playing new and different songs, too, even though Satisfaction will always be a solid staple of their set.



# QUICKES
# HEADS DOWN UNDER

## Tom Chatfield, sales and marketing manager of Quicke's, tells of the inspiration and excitement he found on his recent trip to Australia

**We know from our increasingly frequent visits to the US over the past couple of years that we reap what we sow in terms of export sales.** It has been around a decade since Mary Quicke last visited Australia, so it felt that we were overdue a visit to support our customers Down Under. We are now able to appreciate how the market has come on over the years.

**Our cheese has been sold in Australia for around 30 years.** Brett Graham, head chef of the two Michelin starred restaurant, The Ledbury in London, told me that Quicke's was one of the first great cheeses he could remember tasting back in Oz before he moved to England.

Mary and I spent most of our time on the East Coast since that's where the bulk of the population live, and where food (and especially cheese) culture is most developed. We travelled through Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne over the course of a week. Our first day was in Brisbane, which is a significant city but somewhat in decline after the previous highs of the mining boom. Much of that industry has shifted west, to Perth, where newer sites have opened. There was plenty of good food to be found but Brisbane felt remarkably underdeveloped for a city of its size. There were only two cut-to-order cheese counters in the whole metropolitan area, which caters for a round 2.3 million people! Most residents remarked on how much better the food down south (Sydney and Melbourne) would be when we got there.


VISITNG AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMERS FOR THE FIRST TIMEIN A DECADE

**When we arrived in Sydney on day two, we found a much more developed food scene, as one might expect from Australia's largest city.** We visited some great cheese shops, in particular the stores set up by (and carrying the name of) chef Simon Johnson, who is a real pioneer in bringing fine food products to the Australian dinner plate. English chefs appeared in key roles in the majority of the fine dining establishments that we visited.

We then spent two days in Melbourne, which is only fractionally smaller in populace than Sydney. It has a much more European feel, full of leafy suburbs and with a free tram system rolling through the central city. Mary Quicke and I toured Melbourne on cheese trucks painted like cows, all driven by fantastic ex-chefs. The business that runs these trucks, Calendar Cheese, was originally setup by Will Studd – one of Australia's cheese champions. His business is similarly styled on Harvey & Brockless' model in the UK. Previously, Will ran a chain of delis in London before returning to Australia to set up shop in distribution.

**One of the interesting parallels with the UK is the trend among top chefs to move away from fine dining experiences and towards more casual concepts.** People can enjoy exceptionally high quality of food in a



more relaxed setting. After Melbourne, I headed to Perth and was fortunate enough to visit the Margaret River. This region of Western Australia showcases some excellent field to fork businesses; producing wine, charcuterie, meats, olive oils and beers of outstanding quality.

**The common theme among the regions is the huge commitment to creating a great cheese industry, which in a really tangible sense is being done by provoking people's thinking, palate by palate!** Businesses such as Calendar Cheese in Melbourne are playing a long game by investing heavily in tasting events, pairings and education for anyone that shows interest.

Prior to our visit, great food isn't something I'd heard much about when talking about Australia, but it's available in fantastic abundance and cheese is featuring more and more.

**One of the key differences between the Aussie and British cheese markets is the low availability of domestic artisan cheeses.** Like the UK, Australia is dominated by supermarkets for groceries. This has meant that good quality block Cheddars, Goudas and so on are readily available from more industrial Aussie dairies. If you're looking for the artisan, however, it's much more difficult to track down the sorts of homegrown heroes that we enjoy in the UK. Where artisan is sold, it also tends to show up at fairly high price point, relative to other foods.

**One of the things that really stood out for me was the dominance of imported cheeses**. That said, there were some truly world class examples of cheeses made Down Under, such as the Holy Goat Cheeses from Sutton Grange Organic Farm in Victoria which are divine little mould ripened goat cheeses – delectable when enjoyed in the sunshine with locally grown salads as we experienced them!

**It was interesting seeing the variations in how cheese is being visually merchandised.** What made the great cheese shops really sing were the staff and their knowledge. Some shops were very contemporary with lots of white tiles and immaculate slate, while others were more shabby-chic or farmers' market style. However, what counted for me most in the whole experience was people enthusing and informing their customers about great cheese. I think we do this so well in the UK, but there's undoubtedly always scope to improve.


TOM CHATFIELD SHARING QUICKE'S PRODUCT AND STORY

**For Quicke's as an exporter, this trip held a number of benefits.** We enjoy a diverse spread of customers and that diversity is healthy (while, of course, presenting plenty of its own challenges). The time spent in Australia has allowed us to develop a better understanding of what people enjoy about our product, our story and why they'd choose Quicke's.

For other UK producers, particularly those that have an interest in growing, it's worth being aware that British cheese has a reputation that is right up there. Much of the learning curve of export can be shortened with the help of great cheese exporters. The attentions of the wider world are certainly turning to our shores for more great cheeses, and there are companies that can attend to all of the shipping, legislation, currency risk and so on. I can picture many smaller dairies being put off by the complications of export, but with the right partners it might be less of a brain-drain than one might imagine!









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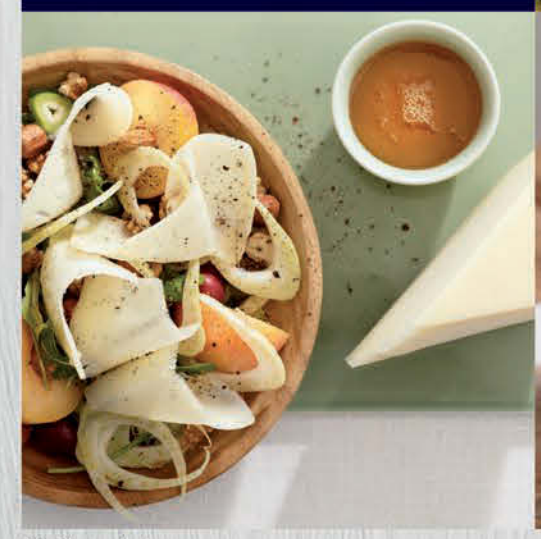


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# FARM SHOP FOCUS

## Running a business on strictly ethical and organic lines has proved a successful strategy for the farm shop on North Wales' Rhug Estate



A LAYOUT WITH GOOD FLOW AT THE RHUG ESTATE FARM SHOP

The Rhug Farm Shop (pronounced 'reeg') is part of the 12,500 acre Rhug Estate in Denbighshire, North Wales. The estate is owned by Lord Newborough, Robert Wynn, who tells Speciality Food that the present bustling farm shop has its origins in a couple of caravans, from which the estate began selling its burgers and organic butchers' meat in 2002. Demand was considerably higher than anticipated. This necessitated the addition of "various temporary structures in some form or other, including the creation of a farm shop behind the burger and butchers vans," Robert says. "It all ended up looking a bit like Mumbai. We weren't coping with the throughput, and so we took the plunge and built a new farm shop." Demand had grown enormously since 2002 and numbers were particularly high in summer, when visitors to the Rhug Estate had only a small inside area where they could to refresh themselves with food and drink.

A new edifice which incorporated a bistro and a larger, covered outside area was clearly needed. The new build opened in time for Christmas, 2011, complete with the planned bistro, although, Robert says, "we also tried to retain the informal grab-and-go aspect in a more casual environment on the terrace. Visitors also have the options of sitting in comfort by a wood-burning stove or enjoying proper meals and good coffee in the bistro."

The farm shop did not get off to a propitious start. "On the day we opened we had no-one through, no visitors at all, Robert says. "However, on day two we found that we were very busy." In fact, business was sufficiently robust for Robert and his team to change their way of operating. "We decided that rather than take the vans around the shows as we had been doing, we would stay where we were." Among early challenges faced by the farm shop's team were the acquiring of planning permission and the discovery that the farm shop had been built on a flood plain. This meant that "the foundations of the shop had to be elevated 1.2m above ground level."

A problem of another sort presented itself when building work was completed three months earlier than had been scheduled. "We were not expecting to open for Christmas that year," he says, "so we had the immediate challenge of staffing the shop." There was also the job of readying the bistro for its scheduled opening in January. "This presented a new challenge in as much as we had to have a fully-staffed kitchen and running a kitchen was a challenge in itself, but we now have that department very well organised."

The Rhug Farm Shop is a business with clear objectives. "The whole drive behind the farm shop is to sell what we produce on the farm," Robert says. "We produce all the proteins, and offer beef, lamb, chicken, turkeys, cheeses and a lot of game. We have a very big fresh meat counter which sells organic meat which we grow on the farm. We've got about 3,000 lines in the farm shop. The whole focus of the farm shop is organic, Fairtrade and quality food. We like to stock Fairtrade because it is joined up thinking with what we do. The organic ethos is very strong. We have a lot of organic Welsh cheeses; these dominate the cheese counter, but we also have other very popular cheeses from elsewhere, including a few European cheeses – although if there is a better Welsh substitute, we will stock that."

### Organic meat

Much of the food sold over the shop's large meat counter is produced on Robert's organic farm, which operates on what the estate calls a "circle of life" principle. "What makes us unique," Robert says, "is that the animals which are bred on the farm are nourished on feed which has been grown on the farm. The product is finished on the farm, goes to the local abattoir and then it comes back to our cutting plant where it is butchered, packed and despatched to all the outlets that we have, both in this country or abroad and, of course, to the farm shop itself." Demand for organic meat and other foods is high and has increased since the recession has drawn to an end. "We deliver to London three times a week and the demand for organic food has been very strong. It was the demand for organic food from abroad which cushioned our path through the recession." Now, following the recession, Robert is finding that "London is Rhug Estate's best market."

The Rhug Farm Shop is now very much a destination retailer. Robert calls it a "one-stop shop." As well as its strong meat sales and concentration on Welsh cheeses and other foods, he says, "we also


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have non-food items that vary from gift items to organic duvets produced from our own sheep and we stock other items like games for children, too.'' The business also features a small conference centre for up to 90 people. The shop is perfectly located to draw traffic coming into Wales on the A5, from Chester and the North East or en route to Snowdonia. A lot of main routes pass Rhug, Robert says, and the farm shop ''has become a very popular stopping off point for people who want to stock up on their way to their holiday cottages, and on their way home, too.''

Diversification of stock and offering additional features such as a bistro is a recipe for success, he maintains. ''I think people want the experience. It helps, he concedes, that the farm shop is positioned ''in this stunningly beautiful part of North of Wales. People like to drive out from Birmingham Manchester and Chester, Cheshire and Shropshire at the weekend, when they have the enjoyment of seeing beautiful countryside and have a really good meal, do their shopping, and go home happy.''

Robert estimates that the farm shop attracts around 500,000 visitors annually. The bistro is particularly popular and gets a lot of repeat business, he says. Its reputation has been boosted by Michelin. ''In 2013 we got Michelin recognition when a Michelin inspector came to the farm. He was really here to find out about the Rhug brand, but he had lunch in the bistro and so for the last three years we have been in the back of the Michelin Guide.'' Selling well from the bistro's menu are the burgers, the organic lamb and beef burgers, but the best-selling item is a more unusual one, the Rhug Estate's bison burger. ''We have a bison herd,'' Robert says, ''and people seem to have locked into the fact that bison meat is very healthy as far as red meat goes. They are prepared to pay a premium for a high quality, healthy meat.''


A WIDE CHOICE OF WINES


BISON MEAT SELLS WELL AT RHUG

## Drive footfall

The shop has a mixed customer base. Along with the many visitors and walkers attracted to the Rhug Estate itself, and travellers stopping off to refuel themselves or stock up on groceries to take away, Robert says, ''we have a strong local presence and local people come here regularly. It's become a social meeting area for locals. Some come for coffee and breakfast, while others have a regular Sunday lunch here.'' Meat is a big draw for a lot of reasons. Customers, he says, ''like to buy into organics and they also like to know where the meat has come from and that the animal has been well-treated.'' Farmhouse breakfasts are in great demand and it has become necessary to pre-book tables for the very popular Sunday lunches.

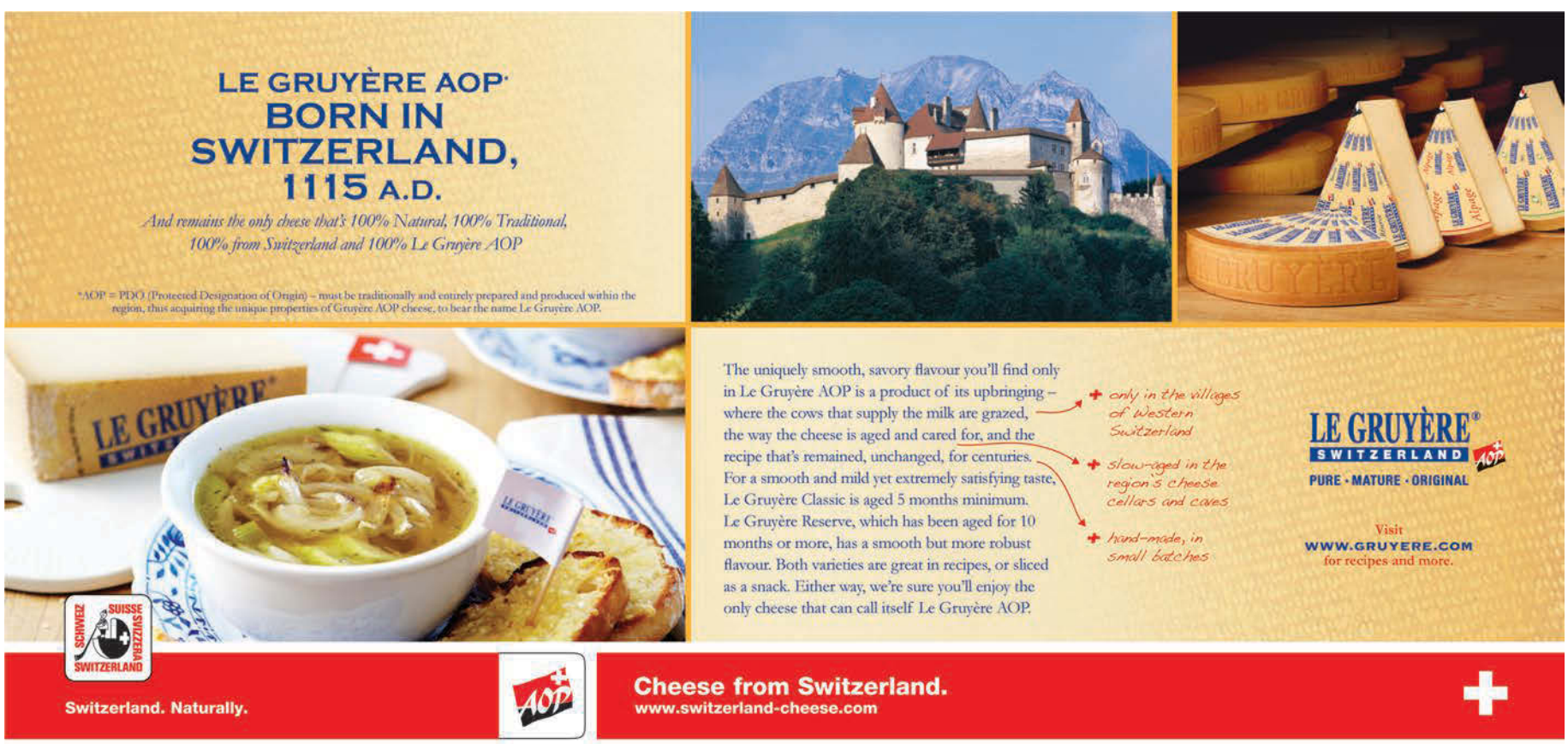
With the Estate attracting visitors in large numbers, promotion might be thought less of a priority than at some other shops. ''I don't think you can ever sit back on your laurels,'' Robert says. ''We use good roadside signage and we also like to think we are actively promoting the shop both online and by having activities such as car rallies other activities. All these help to drive footfall.'' Also helping to drive sales are ''tastings, late night openings, a strong loyalty card membership, and promotional breakfasts.'' The loyalty card scheme is important, Robert says. ''It's good to reward those people who are regular visitors, and give them a sense of belonging. ''

Another reason for this award-winning farm shop's success is its staff, Robert says. ''We are operating in a quite a deprived area of North Wales and are an important local employer. We are blessed with tremendous people. Working here can be challenging in the busy times but our busy times tend to coincide with university holidays, so we can employ a lot of young people who come in and help.'' To run a farm shop successfully, he says, it's hugely important to pay attention to the details. Both stock and store need to be kept fresh at all times and the shop itself should be brightly-lit and offer an attractive environment for visitors. Future plans for the Rhug Estate Farm Shop include a possible increase in floor space and expanding the terrace area where people sit in summer.




BAKED GOODS AND GRAB & GOES- GO QUICKLY!

> ''We have a bison herd, and people seem to have locked into the fact that bison meat is very healthy as far as red meat goes. They are prepared to pay a premium for a high-quality, healthy meat''



# ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS

## Our showcase of the hottest products this season

### Coldpress

Juice with extra WOW! Looking striking in their iconic hexagonal bottles and new, 'nothing to hide' transparent labels, Coldpress is bringing some much-needed swagger back to a juice aisle still recoiling from the shockwaves being caused just now by a bad-tempered sugar tsunami.

Adopting a healthier-living mindset is all well and good, but consumers must remember the reason they adopted juice in the first place. Fruit juice is a rich, daily source of essential vitamins and also of nutrients.

In a world where the ancient 'dark art' of heat-based pasteurisation still takes place, Coldpress offers enlightenment in the shape of HPP (high pressure processing).

Whilst pasteurisation rides roughshod over any fruit or veg's delicate 'top notes,' essential nutrients, antioxidants and aromas, Coldpress tends its top-notch ingredients with kid gloves shielding their great tastes and nutritional integrity.

The joy of harder-working, nutritionally-dense drinks is that less juice (fewer calories/less sugar) needs to be consumed in one's daily pursuit of a healthier lifestyle.

**0208 899 6699**
**coldpress.com**




### Windmill Hill Fruits

Get healthy for the summer with Windmill Hill's frozen fruit.

At Windmill Hill, we're passionate about growing delicious fruits that are bursting with flavour. As award- winning fruit growers, we have a wealth of experience in nurturing some of the juiciest fruits in the business - three generations of farming heritage in fact! So we can supply you with some great tasting fruit... in any quantity and all year round!

Freezing fruit means it can be picked at its optimum ripeness. The mature sun-ripened fruit is then quickly frozen within hours of being picked to lock in the bursting flavour. Freezing fruit neither adds or takes anything away – when defrosted it is still as healthy and nutritious as the day it was picked and frozen!

Windmill Hill can accommodate all size orders.

**01989 730 229 enquiries@ajandcisnell.co.uk britishfrozenfruit.com**







### The Bay Tree

Liven up your shelves with The Bay Tree's bountiful range of preserves, condiments, cooking sauces, sweet treats and more! Established in 1994 by Emma Macdonald, The Bay Tree's recipes capture nature's finest flavours so that they can be enjoyed every day. With over 20 years of experience, the West Country business now produces over 200 lines – all made The Bay Tree way.

The best-seller list includes Spicy Tomato & Caramelised Onion Chutney – sweet and gently spiced, this is sensational in a sarnie or stirred through a stew. The Redcurrant Jelly is a traditional roast accompaniment which retains a sharp, fruity edge. On the sweeter side, The Bay Tree's Passion Fruit Curd and Marinated Miniature Figs are must-stock products both for their versatility and their Great Taste credentials.

**01963 828 020**
**enquiries@thebaytree.co.uk**
**thebaytree.co.uk**




### Peters Yard

Peter's Yard has extended its range and launched three crispbread bites; Sea Salt, Five Seed and Cumin & Nigella Seed.

The baked snacks are based on the Peter's Yard classic sourdough crispbread recipe and made with high fibre, all-natural ingredients.

Developed for various snacking occasions, they are the perfect base for bite-sized canapés, to enjoy with drinks or simply eaten on their own as a snack. The crispbread bites really come into their own when served alongside a dip, as their size and texture make them perfect for dipping without the risk of them breaking or being 'double-dipped'.

Packed into doypacks, which stand upright on the shelf, they have great shelf presence in store,

**07999461761**
**orders@petersyard.com**
**petersyard.com**




### Tims Dairy

Family business Tims Dairy has been making yogurt for over 65 years using only natural ingredients and fresh British milk and cream. These award-winning bio-live Greek-style, live wholemilk and low fat yogurts are all made in the Chilterns, Buckinghamshire.

Recently voted 'Top of the Pots' in Jamie magazine for its Greek Style Natural Yogurt, the range also boasts multiple Great Taste Awards and the Greek-style Vanilla yogurt won Grocer New Product Award 2013.

Eye-catching packaging gives these yogurts premium shelf presence. There is also free downloadable POS available from timsdairy.co.uk and some lovely yogurt recipe booklets available upon request. Follow on facebook.com/timsdairy and Twitter @timsdairy for regular news updates.

**01494 541890 sales@timsdairy.co.uk timsdairy.co.uk**




### Prairie Fire BBQ

Great Taste 2015 award-winning Prairie Fire is the U.K.'s only authentic Kansas City-style BBQ company. Founded by a Kansas City native living in London who longed for the slow-smoked BBQ of his home town, Prairie Fire sauces are handmade in London from only the very best of ingredients.

Our sauces are great on the grill and make an excellent condiment on hamburgers, sandwiches, chips and eggs; anywhere ketchup or brown sauce might be used. Make Prairie Fire products a part of every meal all year long by adding these delicious rubs and sauces to your entrées and also to your vegetables.

Prairie Fire's product line will be expanding in 2016 to include a Carolina-style BBQ sauce, hot sauce, and the best Bloody Mary mix you have ever tasted. Contact us now to experience real American BBQ.

**07408835847**
**eric@prairiefirebbq.com**
**prairiefirebbq.com**




### BigFish Brand Salmon

BigFish Brand brings you delicious Salmon Fillets, rich in Omega 3 and protein and all ready to cook. Single portions of top quality salmon are frozen and individually wrapped so you can prepare as many or as few as you like, straight from the freezer with no fuss, no smell and no waste.

The fillets can be cooked in the oven, under the grill, or poached or microwaved in the pack for an ultra-convenient and healthy quick meal, served with vegetables, potatoes, rice or noodles. There are seven delicious marinated flavours as well as Plain and Organic fillets. Why not try BigFish Brand Salmon with Eastern Thai spices? It's totally delicious and was a Great Taste Award winner in both 2014 and 2015. RRP £5.89 for two fillets (250g) or £9.95 for four (500g).

**01472 355 217**
**contact@bigfishbrand.co.uk**
**bigfishbrand.co.uk**




### Uncle Roys

Uncle Roy's best-selling range of Gourmet Salts has been described as 'serious and indispensable ingredients,' and new for 2016 is the latest addition – Rose Salt.

Rose long been an ingredient of North African, Middle Eastern and southern Asian cookery and has become increasingly popular in Western kitchens in recent years.

Uncle Roy's Rose Petal Jam has become his best-selling jam and is popular in tearooms across the country, and of course his Eat Me! Edible Rose Petals are the first choice for cupcakes and celebration cakes from California to Hong Kong! His Rose Essence is also one of the most popular flavours in the extensive Natural Flavours and Colours range.

Uncle Roy first used rose petals in his first Flower Petal Seasoning – Moffat Meadows – which was introduced ten years ago, so it was a natural choice for this latest addition, which is packed in sixes and available at the same price point as the other nine Gourmet Salts.

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




## Hip Pops

Hip Pops are a soya and potato snack with four flavours that are gluten free. They provide a delicious alternative to similar fried or baked products. Made from the finest quality ingredients, Hip Pops are air-popped and contain typically 50% less fat than standard crisps but with a truly mouthwatering taste. The moreish savoury snacks are available in six different flavours, from the classic Salt & Vinegar to the authentic Sweet Chilli. There's also the tangy Prawn Cocktail, flavourful Barbeque, seasoned Salt & Black Pepper and the much loved Cheese & Onion varieties, so there's a flavour for everyone. What's more, they have more fibre than any other leading popped snack, so they will keep you fuller for longer. They come in 25g or a larger 100g bag great for sharing. Hip Pops were also proud sponsors of the Urban Music Awards 2015.

**01442 871071 info@hip-pops.co.uk hip-pops.co.uk**




## Divine Chocolate

Divine Chocolate, the only 100% Fairtrade and farmer-owned mainstream chocolate company and award-winning social enterprise, has launched two extra special, brand new flavours into its luxury Easter range for 2016.

For a modern flavour with a twist, Divine Toffee & Sea Salt Milk Chocolate Egg (100g) is studded with the sweet crunch of toffee pieces and the contrasting tang of sea salt flakes. It is inspired by one of Divine's best-selling flavoured bars, which was voted the UK's Favourite Fairtrade Product in a public poll by the Fairtrade Foundation.

For dark chocolate lovers, the Divine Raspberry Dark Chocolate Egg (100g) is a thick chocolate shell made with velvety rich Divine dark chocolate, studded with tangy raspberries.

With stylish gold packaging and innovative new flavours, these Easters Eggs make a fine addition to any premium seasonal display.

Available to order in cases of six from all good independent wholesalers.

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




## Anila's Sauces

Founded in 1998, Anila's is a family-owned and operated business producing the finest all natural gourmet food products. Dedication to excellence has garnered them recognition throughout the industry including 11 Great Taste Awards, (two 3* Gold), Best Speciality Awards, Best Vegan Product and Free-From Food Awards.

Eight varieties of superb curry sauces are uniquely made with dedication and love using the finest ingredients in small batches to give an authentic home-made taste, without preservatives or additives. Quick and easy to make delicious curries without any effort, they are also free from sugar, dairy, gluten, onion and garlic, suitable for those with intolerances.

A superb range of pickles and chutneys is also produced using single fruits and vegetables to capture the freshness that each one has to offer giving a pure taste. These are delicious accompaniments with cheeses, curries, sandwiches and in marinades.

**0208 577 6162 info@anilassauces.com anilassauces.com**



## field fare

field fare, suppliers of quality frozen foods are proud to be a winner of a Gold star from the 2015 Great Taste Awards for their British Steak and Kidney Pie.

The award-winning British Steak & Kidney pie has been developed to a traditional recipe and boasts a generous and chunky filling in a rich gravy. Encased in a shortcrust pastry base with a puff pastry lid, it serves one and cooks from frozen in 35-40 minutes.

field fare's award-winning pie is part of a range of four British Classic pies, including Chicken, Mushroom in a White Wine Sauce; Ham Hock with Peas in a creamy Béchamel Sauce and a vegetarian option of Sweet Butternut Squash, creamy Goats Cheese and Leeks.

The pies are ideal for retail but also perfect for coffee shops as they are easy to freshly cook and add to lunch time menus.

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




## Island Bakery

Island Bakery offers your customers a range of six great tasting all-butter biscuits, perfect to enjoy any time. Each one is made from quality organic ingredients and has been mixed and baked using local sources of renewable and sustainable energy.

Our fun packaging tells the story of our Scottish island home and the characters to be found here on the Isle of Mull.

Luckily, you can enjoy our biscuits beyond the island's shores. Our best-selling Lemon Melts are being enjoyed en route to many exotic locations by passengers aboard British Airways aircraft.

If you would like your store to be included in the database, email stockist@islandbakery.co.uk or use the reply paid postcard inside cases to be entered into a draw to win a hamper of Mull produce.

**01688 302 223**
**dawn@islandbakery.co.uk**
**islandbakery.co.uk**

## Gruyère AOP

Made in western Switzerland, Gruyère AOP has been produced in the same way since 1115AD, using raw milk from cows fed on grass in summer and hay in winter. The skilled cheesemakers use 400 litres of fresh milk to make a single 35kg Gruyère AOP wheel. It is the only cheese that has won the title of Best Cheese in the World at the World Cheese Awards four times, which just goes to show how much work and skill is needed to create its unique and delicious flavour.

Gruyère AOP can be found with different maturities: the Classic is matured for six months and has a delicate, nutty, creamy flavour. The Reserve is matured for ten months, and has a drier, more grainy mouthfeel. Then you can find an older Gruyère AOP, 14 months or more, giving it a much stronger flavour. The age brings a difference in taste, but the recipe always stays the same.

**gruyere.com**




## merci

There is no better way of expressing a sincere and heartfelt 'thank you' than with a gift that speaks for itself: merci Finest Selection.

merci is a delicious assortment of the finest milk and dark chocolates made from the very best ingredients available. With eight carefully chosen varieties of individually-wrapped chocolates, merci provides a special delight to suit all tastes, making it the perfect gift.

Say thank you and show someone that you really care with this impeccable selection of the finest quality chocolates.

Available in two formats for different gifting occasions:
10 x 250g for everyday thank yous, Valentine's Day and Gift for Teacher.

8 x 400g for more special and seasonal gifting including Mother's Day, Easter and Christmas.

merci, offering a new way to say thank you.

**01264 345 513**
**info@pettywood.co.uk**
**pettywood.co.uk**







## Cottage Delight

Speciality food company Cottage Delight has introduced a brand new product line to its award-winning range of essential table sauces within 2016's Everyday Collection. Packed full of hot flavours, Bloody Mary Ketchup follows the success of the popular Bloody Mary Salsa and offers a spicy and timely twist on the traditional ketchup.

Inspired by the hot flavours of the traditional cocktail, Bloody Mary Ketchup blends tomato, vodka, Worcestershire Sauce and Tabasco to create a unique sauce that's as tasty with al fresco barbeque dishes as it is with Cottage Delight dipping crackers for an indulgent snack.

Priced £2.14 per 220ml bottle (£25.68 per case) with an RRP of £3.20, Bloody Mary Ketchup joins Cottage Delight's range of nine table sauces which work exceptionally well for in-store tastings, which can maximise sales by as much as 11%.

**01538 382 020**
**info@cottagedelight.co.uk**
**cottagedelight.co.uk**

## Bonieri

Showcasing the finest gianduja products from Turin, Italy, Bonieri's speciality chocolates and stylish 'Bella' selection boxes have already won five gold stars at the Great Taste Awards.

Bonieri's range includes dairy and gluten free pralines, crumbly nougat, luxury spreads and much more. The traditional recipe gianduja is made using only the highest quality ingredients including the Piedmont hazelnut and Madagascar Bourbon vanilla beans. Flavours include dark cocoa, coffee and pure hazelnut as well as Sicilian pistachio and almond.

The stylish ribboned gift boxes and bags range from 100g up to 440g. Faberge-inspired Imperial eggs filled with classic gianduiotti and a triple layered cremini offer something a little different for Easter.

Bonieri also has a new range of tray style 'Diva' boxes with sugar-free gianduiotti launching later this year.

Stockists include Selfridges and Harrods.

**0844 414 8588**
**hello@bonieri.com**
**bonieri.com**




## James White Drinks

Wake up with a Zing! The Organic Ginger Zinger (7cl shot) is guaranteed to revitalise and invigorate the senses, with the naturally powerful flavour of ginger making it a great alternative to caffeine-loaded coffee and energy drinks. Made by James White Drinks, award-winning makers of fine pressed fruit and vegetable juices, this pocket shot hits the spot for true ginger lovers, giving an intense ginger experience with a great natural taste made with the real thing – 26% pressed ginger juice, 57% apple juice and 17% water and absolutely nothing else (no nasty preservatives, artificial colours or flavours) Certified organic by The Soil Association.




For more than 25 years, we've been tasting, testing and experimenting to bring you our most delicious range of juices yet. We pride ourselves on the fact that there's a James White juice for everyone and any occasion. Find out more at jameswhite.co.uk/ginger_zinger.

**01473 890 111 info@jameswhite.co.uk jameswhite.co.uk**

## Stag Bakeries

Stag Bakeries has launched West Coast, a new sub-brand that brings a contemporary twist and point of difference to the range. The first products to be launched in the West Coast stable are four Sweet Straws: Apple & Cinnamon, Blackberry & Basil, Raspberry & Chocolate and Sour Cherry & Vanilla. The light, crunchy, buttery hand-baked straws are a sweet twist on traditional savoury straws. They can be enjoyed with yogurt and ice cream but are especially good as an alternative to a traditional biscuit.

This new range was launched in January and is packed into vibrant, colourful packaging that will naturally create attention on the shelf! Suitable for vegetarians.

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







## Country Puddings

Country Puddings' top selling product, Creamy Vanilla Custard, is a fresh chilled product made with double cream and Madagascan vanilla. It perfectly complements any pudding, can be served hot or cold, and has a guaranteed shelf life of 21 days. Available in two sizes, the 330g has 2-3 servings and the 500g has 4-5 servings. If you'd like to become a stockist and see this fly off your shelves, please contact Cotswold Fayre or Country Puddings direct.

**01768 480 864**
**info@countrypuddings.co.uk**
**countrypuddings.co.uk**




## Hawkshead

The flavour of fashion is in the new Couture range, which brings together a selection of the beautifully handcrafted Hawkshead Relish award-winning preserves in both sweet and savoury varieties and presented in exquisite jars accessorised with a chic neck tag.

This exclusive range brings sophisticated elegance to the dining table as well as making stylish culinary gifts totally in vogue for the discerning foodie.

Available in Petite or Grande sizes with the added functionality of being stackable to optimise shelf space and providing a stunning retail display.

Handmade with optimum quality ingredients and completely natural without any artificial flavouring, colouring or additives as well as suitable for vegetarians as well as gluten and nut-free. Simple.

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

## Walkers Nonsuch

Deliciously Original Creamy Toffee Bars, made by family toffee maker Walkers Nonsuch create a point of difference on any confectionery display. Using just good ingredients like whole milk and butter, the bars remain a true favourite of the nation and are free from anything artificial.

"There's nothing quite like breaking your own toffee", comments Emma Walker, "These bars are very traditional, you have to whack, then unwrap and enjoy. All our toffee is made to the same recipe but everyone says the slab toffee always tastes better!"

Ten bars come in a tin tray, and varieties include Brazil nut, Liquorice and New Fruit & Nut. Toffee bars are unique to Walker's Nonsuch and are an old fashioned product loved by young and old. Bars retail from 70p each.

Either contact us or order from Hider Food Imports hiderfoods.co.uk.

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




## Raviolificio San Marco

For two generations, our family at Raviolificio San Marco has been manufacturing quality, fresh, artisanal pasta and ravioli true to authentic Italian tradition.

My father Gabriele first set up our factory in 1973. Since then, my whole family has been involved in producing food here, in the beautiful province of Varese, at the foothills of the Alps in Northern Italy. We like to think that the lovely lakes and high mountains here bring a special flavour to the ingredients we use!

Since we produce in small batches, buying only what we need, the flavours may change slightly from one batch to another, but they always taste great and are always the best quality. Every batch of pasta leaving our factory has my mother's approval.

We'd be glad to work with you and customize any of our products. Buon Appetito!

Marco Trolese & Chris Simonetta

**+ 39 0332 46 33 56**
**info@raviolificiosanmarco.it**
**specialravioli.co.uk**






## Pasta Garofalo

Italian pasta maker Garofalo has been making high quality pasta since 1789 in Gragnano, the birthplace of pasta in Italy.

Making handcrafted pasta for Garofalo does not mean having out-dated machines or producing products by hand, but knowledge, modern technology and a sound philosophy of production. As artisans do, Garofalo carefully controls every single aspect of the process until the final result is what they consider the absolute best pasta.

Pasta is simply made with water and durum wheat semolina and you can't produce excellent pasta if the best wheat is not used. It is the quality and quantity of gluten present primarily that determines the quality of the wheat and we only use high-quality durum wheat semolina meeting strictly controlled criteria. The result is a consistent, high-quality pasta, which is a pleasure to eat every time!

Garofalo presents its premium product in transparent packaging, making it instantly recognisable on the shelf. We have nothing to hide and everything to share, and we believe that high quality pasta is beautiful to look at.

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




## Fairfields

Fairfields Farm Crisps launches 'hauntingly-good' snacks!

Sailing into the snack aisle this year are Adnams Ghost Ship Crisps, a joint collaboration between Fairfields Farm Crisps and Adnams Brewery.

Working together, the Essex crisp maker and Suffolk brewery have developed the new Adnams Ghost Ship crisps to appeal to a more discerning snack lover, describing them as hauntingly-good snacks that bring together the delicious crunch of artisan crisps and the hoppy flavour of the pale ale.

"We're renowned for working with like-minded producers in East Anglia, so it has been fantastic to collaborate with such a well-known brand as Adnams to create something new and exciting for the snack market," explain Robert Strathern, founder of Fairfields Farm Crisps.

True to its roots, the new crisps are packed with provenance and flavour.

"These crisps have a wonderful flavour, the ale works beautifully with our delicious potatoes."

**01206 241613**
**hello@fairfieldsfarmcrisps.co.uk**
**fairfieldsfarmcrisps.co.uk**




## The Handmade Meringue Company

A small family business producing six pre-packed meringue products, suitable for all occasions. Made from free-range pasteurised egg whites, each and every meringue is hand piped. With a shelf life of 16 weeks, these products are ideal for garden centres, delis and farm shops. They are available in Dobbies Foodhalls and can be distributed nation wide. Ready to serve and handmade in Scotland.

**0845 271 2077**
**sales@handmademeringue.co.uk**
**handmademeringue.co.uk**




## Three Little Pigs

Pigs Rule! A top drawer chorizo and salami range with a rich Yorkshire twist! Made by Jon and Charlotte Clarkson on their free-range farm, they use pork from their own herd of rare breed pigs. Their first sow 'Mavis' was a wedding gift and the wellbeing of their pigs is paramount. The pork is combined with the best ingredients, following recipes devised by Jon. This approach has resulted in a host of stars at the Great Taste Awards, the product being selected as a Defra Food Star and acquiring a string of celebrity fans. This is food made the slow way. It takes more than nine months of love and dedication to produce this chorizo and salami in the fresh air of the Kiplingcotes Wold. Embrace one of Yorkshire's best kept secrets, and use for either fine dining or sublime snacking. Available through distributors or direct. A SALSA accredited, ambient range.

**07910315956**
**hello@threelittlepigschorizo.co.uk**
**threelittlepigschorizo.co.uk**

## Flavour Magic




Flavourmagic.com has strong roots in professional kitchens. The founder of Flavour Magic cooked professionally for 18 years and has a wide and varied range of experiences and tastes in the seasoning market, thus bringing you the very best seasonings for both domestic and commercial use. We offer salt that's been smoked for 40 hours then roasted with garlic, shallots, coriander seed, mustard seed, harissa spice blend that has a strong mint flavour, cumin, coriander and chilli flavour. Flavour magic prides itself on its versatility, quality and freshness of its range, so please contact Flavour magic.com for a complimentary sample today.

**01314 433 772 tim@flavourmagic.com flavourmagic.com**




## Hans Sloane

Hans Sloane makes unique chocolate beads which melt in hot milk or water to give a delicious hot chocolate that really tastes of chocolate, unlike many of the sugary powders. The chocolate beads are made and packed by our small team of chocolatiers in our studio in Byfleet. As well as our Smooth Milk and Rich Dark, we have a Taste of Honey, the only honey drinking chocolate on the market, and offer Madagascar 67% cocoa and Ecuador 70% cocoa, for the discerning chocoholic. Hans Sloane lived from 1660 to 1753 and as well as owning Chelsea (the borough, not the football club), he was physician to King George I. He brought the idea of milk drinking chocolate to London in 1687 and sold this through Whites of Soho. Eventually the Cadbury brothers bought the recipe and used it for over 40 years. Also from his travels he brought back the first sample of Theobroma Cocoa to Europe which is still on show in the Sloane Herbarium in the Natural History Museum. Hans Sloane is available direct from Diverse 01278 792 426.

**01932 356 008 hans@sirhanssloane.com sirhanssloane.com**




## Stoats

Edinburgh's favourite porridge company has been serving the nation delicious, nutritious porridge for over ten years. Their products are made from a unique blend of premium Scottish oats and combined with the best natural ingredients.

From classic porridge and pre-blended fruit, seeds and spice varieties, to handmade Stoats Porridge Oat Bars and oatcakes, they offer a healthy, convenient breakfast and snack food.

Following fun-filled years of porridge pioneering, Stoats continues to grow its range and now has Cherry & Dark Chocolate and Orange & Dark Chocolate Porridge Oat Bars to offer as the perfect pick-me-up... all made by hand with wonderful Scottish oats!

Find them direct, or in Hider and The Cress Company.

**01316 579 955 hello@eatstoats.co.uk eatstoats.com**







## Mrs Bridges

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

Mrs Bridges is delighted to announce the launch of two new single jar products into the all-year-round range, with items available from February 2016.

The new lines are Blueberry & Pomegranate Preserve and Cranberry & Cherry Preserve.

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**
**mrsbridges.co.uk**



## Modena Estense 1598

Since 1598, Modena's Dukes Estense court has been recognised for spreading the reputation of the region's gastronomy across Europe. Today, the same passion for the best culinary traditions prevails within Modena Estense, a fine food distributor dedicated to allowing its customers across the world access to authentic Italian ingredients, exclusive recipes and carefully-selected products ranging from typical all-natural Italian grocery products to award-winning Panettone and Pandoro made in traditional ovens and packed with care by people with disabilities in a social co-op. We are able to ship directly to independent stores or via local distributor in all EU regions.

**+39 059 574 977**
**commerciale@modenaestense.it**
**modenaestense.it**

# RETAILER OF REPUTE



## Adam Barber, food hall buyer at Fenwick Newcastle, welcomes us to the newly-opened cornucopia of food and drink




I have been lucky enough to be the Food Hall Buyer at Fenwick Newcastle for just over two years now. In those two years I have worked on our new Food Hall project, which has just launched. I think I have one of the best jobs in the industry, working for a special and unique company with great colleagues and customers plus some lovely suppliers, all in the heart of a city going through a food revolution.

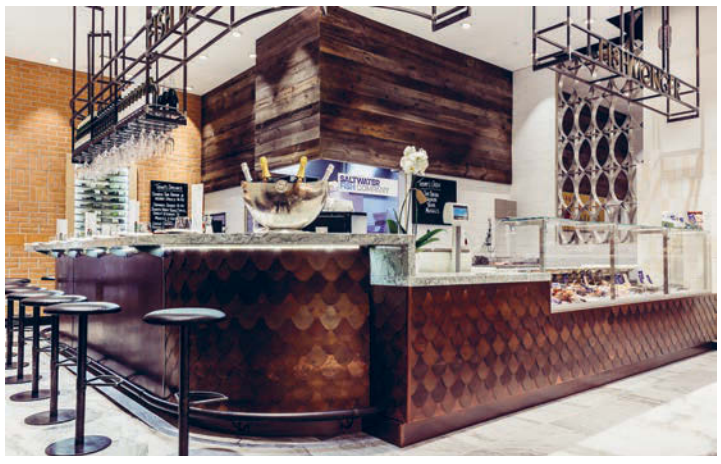
My first experience of food retail was as a Saturday worker at my local Waitrose store at the age of 16. My time with the upmarket retailer lasted for eight years, including that spent at college and university during which I was on Waitrose's industrial gap year scheme in fresh food buying. After university I decided to leave the South East of England and join Morrisons Supermarkets in the heart of Yorkshire as a buyer in fresh food. I learnt some really valuable lessons and picked up vital skills during my career with the retailer, but after five years I decided to follow my passion of working with premium food and joined the Fenwick Newcastle team.

Food at Fenwick Newcastle has a rich heritage and we have seen the industry go through some rather radical changes, with competitors coming and going and food trends changing for the better – and the worse – but through all of this we have remained in the same place on 39 Northumberland Street.

As a result of this heritage our customers have real ownership of the Food Hall. Before we started work on the Food Hall redevelopment we asked our core customer base for their input. What we didn't expect was for 4,000 of them to reply – all with their own personal opinions. This is what has kept our Food Hall going, our loyal customers who appreciate personal service.



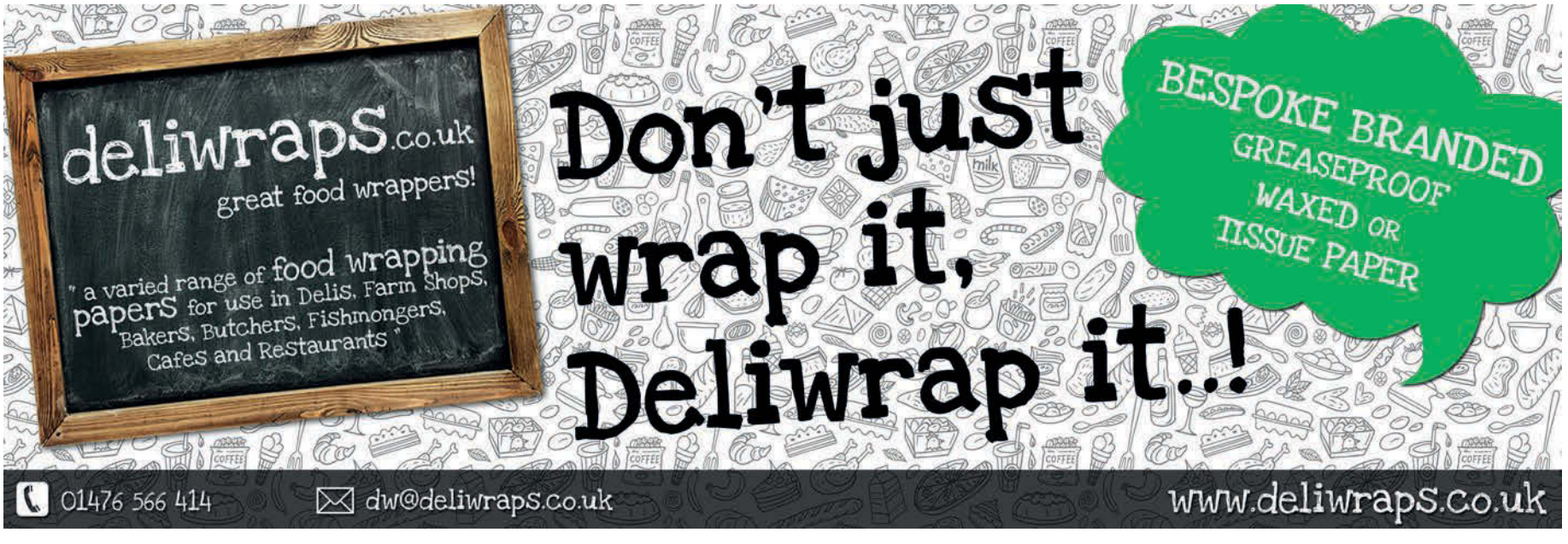

Our customer base not only comes to us for unique merchandise but also a unique experience, and this is what we aim to provide in the Food Hall at Fenwick Newcastle. Our role isn't just about placing food on a shelf, customers now want to touch, taste and talk about food. Our Food Hall has evolved with this trend. Our newly-opened Food Hall is selling patisserie that can be either taken away or eaten within our newly-opened Mason + Rye bakery-café. Customers can talk to our dedicated charcuterie expert at the delicatessen counter and then taste those flavours in our Mediterranean-influenced restaurant, Fuego. We also have fishmonger Saltwater Fish Company selling locally-landed fresh fish either over the counter or to eat in at their bar. Our Food Hall is now a hospitality business, and in the first few weeks, our customers were telling us that they love the change.



Our customers read about food trends in the press and on social media, plus they watch food related programmes on television. These all drive demand for specific products – for example, this week we have been asked for Iced Pressed Olive Oil and Coconut Jam. This is great: it keeps me on my toes and inspires me to take some risks.

In the main, however, our customers expect Fenwick to be at the forefront of change and to lead

> "We are now moving into a new phase in the Food Hall's history where our primary role is to entertain, excite and inspire our customer's food choices while still being able to offer that personal and unique service in Newcastle"







consumer tastes. They expect to see brands that they have never seen before and they want to be excited by new concepts. For example, the wave of growth in Middle Eastern and North African cuisine hasn't really hit the North East in a big way yet, but we now have an entire bay dedicated to Middle Eastern ingredients, herbs and spices. It's up to us to show our consumer what great products they are.

Promotions used to mean discounts but our customers no longer expect this; what they want is to be excited by new products. Customers are hungry for knowledge about the food they are eating so we try to provide this, letting them speak directly to suppliers and producers in the Food Hall on a weekly basis.

Events are another new marketing avenue for the Food Hall. With our newly acquired restaurant spaces we hope to be able to offer tasting and education sessions for customers. We mainly use social media to promote events and promotions in our Food Hall. We can target the right customer in the right way and get a pretty much instant response.

## Selling well

Even though we are in key seasonal trading, our customers still love a health trend! Local operators The Naked Deli have just opened their doors in the Fenwick Food Hall and provide a dedicated one-stop shop for clean, healthy and great tasting food. Cold-pressed juices are big sellers and anything with cashew nuts or coconut is still selling well!

More traditional (and less healthy) is our newly revamped cheese range. We are seeing amazing growth since we launched our new range with the help of Neal's Yard and Hennart, world-renowned cheese merchants. Top sellers are Parmigiano Reggiano "San Pietro" and also Doddington Original from artisan producers Doddington Dairy.

## Supermarkets vs independents

Having worked in both industries, I must say that I have respect for both sides of the food-retailing world. We have a world leading supermarket industry in the UK that is incredibly competitive – especially at the moment – which means consumers generally pay lower prices. Supermarkets feed a huge amount of families every week so they have their place for basic commodities.

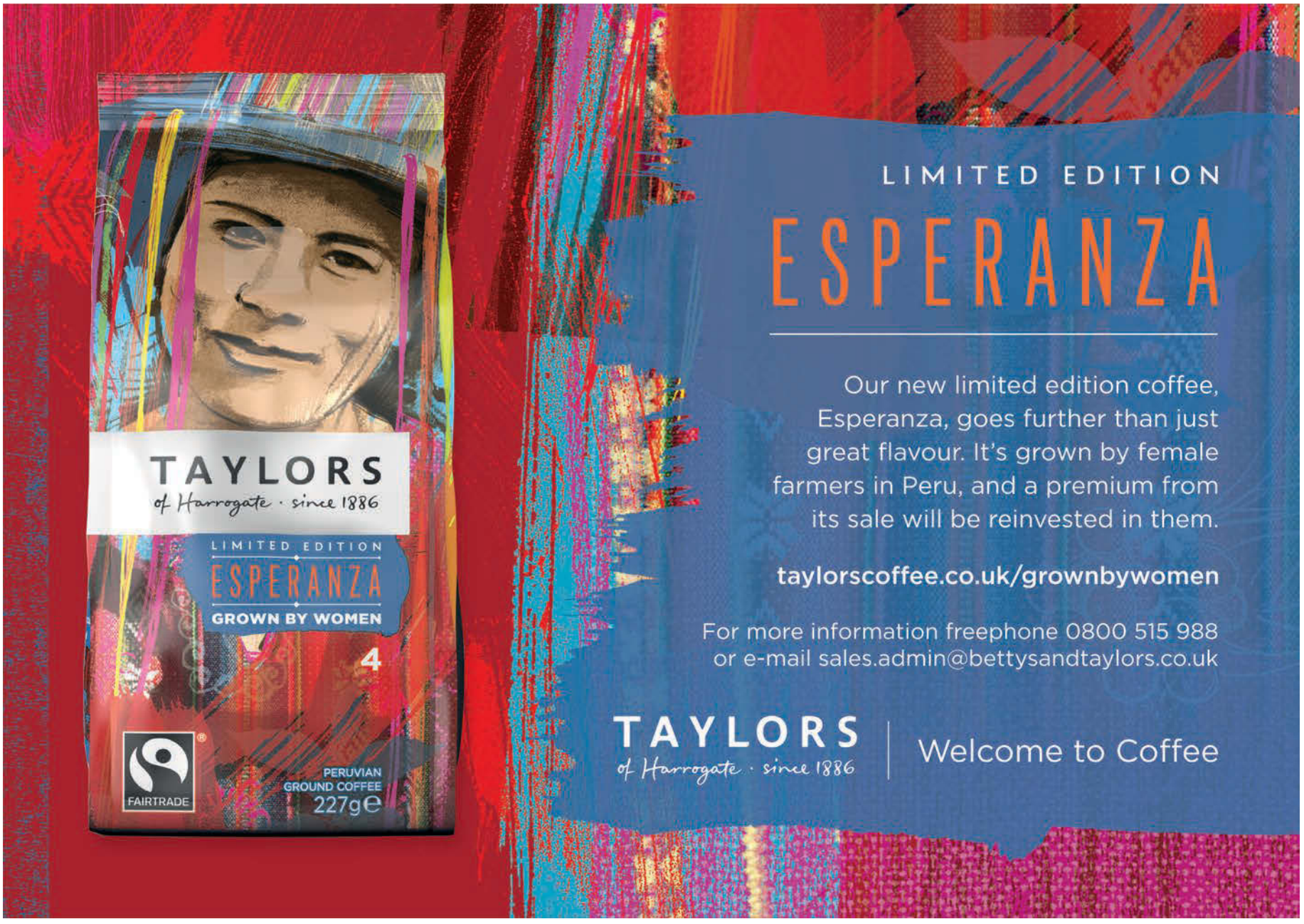
However, the independent sector can offer something that the big players can never do and that is something unique to their local customer base. Customers are looking for a better quality offer, whether that is from an amazing local supplier or the finest artisan produce from around the world, coupled with good advice and fantastic personal service.

Premium chocolate bars
Locally roasted coffee
Quality olive oil
Japanese products
Make your own kits
Hot chocolate
Charcuterie
Honey

**TRENDING NOW**

Pre packed prepared meals – customers now want to make meals from scratch

> "Our role isn't just about placing food on a shelf – customers now want to touch, taste and talk about food"









# THE GREAT SPECIALITY FOOD TRENDSPOTTER

## Wondering what trends to expect in 2016? Sally-Jayne Wright shops around to ensure you have your finger on the pulse

### The Do-It-Yourself Food movement

Did Bake-Off start this trend or was it leaner times, or concern about where our food comes from? Whatever the trigger, there's been a revival in 'make your own'. This has led to the appearance of kits and accessories ranging from home brew equipment to chocolate making kits (sales@keylink.org), grow your own mushroom kits (gumelo.com) to truffle trees (englishtruffles.co.uk).

Fancy curing your own bacon? Ross and Ross Food supplies a make your own bacon cure mix to 150 farm shops and delis as well as Harrods, Selfridges and Harvey Nichols. "It was tricky at first," says managing director, Ross Bearman, "as our product is still very new. But by the end of September, women were buying them four at a time as gifts for men." Their latest launch is a salmon-curing kit, allowing wannabe home curers to make beetroot-cured, smoky or gin-cured salmon in two days (rossandrossfood.co.uk).

Nicki Wildin, local sourcing manager at Gloucester Services reports, "Cheese-making and bacon curing sets form a large part of our giftware range, and from our sales so far seem to be a great gift for men and women. Sales of these items increase considerably during Christmas, Father's Day and Mother's Day."

### Sweet success

Interviewed in Snack Buyer, Edward Berry, former managing director of Ludlow Food Centre, reckoned traditional or retro sweets had had their day. At Speciality & Fine Food Fair, I was told that liquorice, however, is still flying out the door. We also saw old favourites like Crunchies and Wagon Wheels being deconstructed and reproduced with more natural ingredients. Examples include handcrafted honeycomb shards dipped in coatings that included peanut butter and 70% dark chocolate (bemightyfine.co.uk). My favourites were a satisfying, not-too-sweet range of Simply Chocolate chocolate-cum-cereal bars from an artisan maker based in Copenhagen (ajaportfoliobrands.com) and individually wrapped, Belgian chocolate-covered marshmallows (baru.be). This year's chocolate has single-estate credentials.

### Morning goods and brunch options

US-style comfort food and brunch is still fashionable, and we're seeing plenty of innovation in the morning goods sector. Bring on cheese Danishes, Belgian-style sugar-coated waffles, fruits of the forest-filled scones, chocolate hot cross buns and Danishes, sweet and savoury pancakes and crêpes. Crumpets – be they sourdough or buttermilk, square or baked with cheese and black pepper – are in. Any carb goes, provided it's suitable for brunch and more exciting than toast.

### Snack attack

Snackers have become health conscious. They want portion-controlled, calorie-counted, high fibre and protein hits between meals, so biltong is a good bet and a high-fibre snack such as vegan-friendly Taking the Pea – coated crunchy peas with smoked ham flavour – could do well (ttpsnacks.com).

It's a bonus if the snack contains one of your five-a-day. Examples are Emily's crunchy pineapple and banana fruit crisps (emilyfruitcrisps.com) and Nim's (nimsfruitcrisps.com). Popcorn is still popping away, in every flavour from cappuccino to wasabi. You're sick of hearing it, but... gluten-free sells. Snack-makers including Ten Acre have found it pays to appeal to as wide a market as possible. Their popcorn is gluten and dairy-free, vegan, halal and kosher.

### Fermented foods

There's been an explosion of interest in fermented foods: kefir, kimchi, kombucha (fermented tea), sauerkraut and sourdough among many others. In my view, one of the most delicious is Great Taste Award-winning Riazhenka, a cultured, baked milk drink reminiscent of rice pudding. Natasha Bowes, founder of Bio-tiful Dairy which supplies it through Riverford Organics said, 'When I was growing up in Russia, kefir was a crucial part of a healthy diet and millions of people consume it every day for its nutritional and digestive properties. At the end of 2013, we were in UK ten stores. That number is now 400."

Spill the Beans, a health foods shop in Wimborne, Dorset has been stocking kefir on and off for a number of years, and in the last 12 months demand has quadrupled.
Conventional yoghurt, meanwhile, is going from strength to strength with gourmet versions made from organic full cream milk in the ascendant.

### Free-from and gluten-free

When Bake-off contestants are asked to make a gluten-free technical challenge, you know this trend has gone mainstream. Another sign is that food manufacturers are using potato or rice flour as a filler instead of crumbs so they can claim gluten-free status on the packaging.
Immediate Media, publishers of BBC Good Food, the UK's biggest selling cookery magazine, has launched Eating and Living Gluten-free which will appear six times a year. Joe Drennan of Spill the Beans in Wimborne, Dorset said, "We actually had to shift shelves around to accommodate our expanded range of gluten-free products." If you can offer your gluten-free customers great tasting versions of the products they miss, including pasta, bread, pastry and crisps, you're onto a winner.

### Flavours of the month

Salted caramel is still going strong as are sweet-salt combinations such as milk chocolate pretzels, chocolate with sea salt and peanut butter in sweet recipes. Chilli is still around but is not quite so ubiquitous as before.
Gin – craft and branded - turns up in products ranging from gin-cured salmon (see above) to gin and tonic ice cream (Sipsmiths and Jude's). Coco Chocolate's gin and tonic chocolate won a Great Taste Award in 2014 (cocochocolate.co.uk) while Chococo's Twisted Nose gin chocolates – infused with, would you believe, locally grown fresh watercress – this year took an Academy of Chocolates Gold Award. Aldi's gin and tonic crisps are sure to have provided a talking point at Christmas parties.
The use of rose, lemon, cardamom and cinnamon in confectionery, cakes, biscuits and even green tea reflects the continuing popularity of Levantine and North African cuisine. Gourmet Almonds flavoured with rose (pimlicoconfectioners.co.uk) would be an elegant finale to a tagine dinner.

### Nuts for coconut

Our love affair with coconut looks set to linger because coconut ticks many boxes. Coconut water has potassium, sodium and magnesium to rehydrate you after exercise or illness and also tastes great. Dairy avoiders find yoghurt and ice cream they can eat because it's made with coconut milk (coyo.co.uk). Health-conscious customers looking to reduce their consumption of refined sugar will appreciate coconut sugar's reputation for having a lower glycaemic index than refined sugar to keep blood sugar levels stable. Used in the tropics for millennia, coconut oil is the fat from pressed coconuts and is believed to have many health benefits. At Speciality & Fine Food Fair, I came across a raw, cold-pressed organic coconut oil in handy 10ml sachets ready to pour onto salad (cocofina.com).

### MAKE THE MOST OF TRENDS

- Things change quickly in the food industry. Don't over-order, and keep a close eye on shelf life
- Keep abreast of the BBC's Great British Bake-Off schedules. Interest in home-baking surges when the trailers for the Autumn season start in July. There's invariably another short series of Celebrity or Comic Relief Bake-Off in the spring
- Know your customers. It doesn't matter if cappuccino popcorn is in if they prefer salt 'n' vinegar crisps
- If the product, e.g. cold brew coffee or kefir, is new, make it clear what it is, how to use it and what the benefits are. Arrange demos and tastings
- Support your DIY food kits with in-store events and loyalty schemes. How about a monthly home brew club as advertised by trendy London beer shop webroughtbeer.co.uk
- Trust your judgement. Does it taste good?

> "If you can offer your gluten-free customers great tasting versions of the products they miss, including pasta, bread, pastry and crisps, you're onto a winner"

# MEET THE BUYER

## Deli-vert makes the most of being situated on a street of independent shops in Hoole, Chester


DELI VERT'S WELL-STOCKED AND WELCOMING COUNTER

Good high streets stuffed with independent shops are hard to find these days, but Simon' Price's Deli-vert is just one of a string of such businesses on Faulkner Street in Hoole, Chester. The street has been shortlisted for the High Street of the Year Award. Not a bad place for a deli, you would think. Simon agrees: "we're a village within Chester and there's a great mix of regulars and tourists and locals who come in here for lunch and also for treats, for want of a better phrase. The community spirit here is very strong and this shop forms part of that community and helps make it a special place. We have a fishmongers, a butchers and a fruit and veg shop, who are all independent retailers."

As far as he knows, the shop has been trading for "about 15 years" but Simon took it on a little more than 12 months ago after a career in finance and insurance. He was careful not to fix a business which already was running well. "I didn't want to mess about with it too much," he says. "At times, I feel more like a custodian." However, during this first year, Simon says, the shop has "won the Chester Food & Drink Award for Best Deli in Cheshire and the Best Sandwich Shop in Cheshire." Basket spend varies wildly, he says. "Today I had someone in for a £60 hamper, but some one else bought just one of our quiches, which are £2.25."

Supporting local businesses is high on Simon's list of priorities. "Our tag line is 'fine foods from Cheshire and beyond,' he says. "We try and source at least 50% of the stock from within 50 miles of the shop. This can be challenging at times, but there are a great many very good cheesemakers in Cheshire making traditional and pasteurized cheese, such as Chorlton Farm Cheese, who make Cheshire cheeses, including a blue one. We also stock Mrs Appleby's, Shropshire Blue, Nantwich Blue, Ribbledale goat's cheese and Snowdonia Black Bomber, which is relatively local. Among non-local cheese selections at Deli-vert are Stilton (also a Stilton with mango) and "Continental standards such as Brie de Meaux." The shop stocks local preserves and pickles and a good selection of meats: "roast ham, turkey, pastrami, beef and smoked ham, Little Pigs chorizos, prosciutto and Serrano among others."


SIMON PRICE "STRONG COMMUNITY SPIRIT"

### Taste test

When it comes to general stocking, Simon says, "producers must first of all pass the taste test. All food needs to be of a high quality. "I think it's always important to have a story behind the product, especially if it is local. People aren't just buying a product. A story behind a product is a great sales tool. The chap at Chorlton Farm makes the cheese by hand, and turns it using an old churn system. It's unpasteurised, traditional cheese made by a producer on a farm You tell people this and they know that they are investing in something that is better than cheese which has sweated in a piece of plastic down at the supermarket. I will stock anything which passes the taste test and has a good story." Simon also responds to customer demand: "I'm stocking Vacheron, which is in season just now, because there was a local request for it. I took Grandma Singletons Lancashire in response to a local request for it."




Pre-prepared meals and snacks are appreciated by local clientèle. "We make quiche, sausage rolls and ready meals such as lasagne, cottage pie, fish pie and tartiflette," Simon says. "Some people come in regularly for these. They are happy to know they don't have to cook on a Wednesday night because they can pick up a lasagne from the deli."



Other revenue streams include hampers and an outside catering service, offering business lunches to a couple of regular clients and the occasional one-off: "last week we made a chicken casserole for someone's 80th birthday," Simon says.

Simon promotes the deli by producing flyers which he delivers to local guest houses and "using Twitter a lot. "I also do a lot of networking with local businesses with whom we have a symbiotic relationship. I buy all my meat from the local butcher and get my veg from the local fruit and veg place. As much as possible, we try to keep the money within the community. We all try to support and promote each other's businesses and run community events. I'm currently in discussions with the local food assembly. We were in the Observer a month or two ago but that coverage was a little too national – it needs to be local."

Having completed his first year, it is Simon's opinion that the most important things to get right are "managing your overheads so you always know where you are, good staffing and reliable stocking. People need to now that what they buy one week will still best in stock the next." Asked what he would change if he had to start over, Simon says that with hindsight he would have stocked for Christmas stock better and understood early stocking deadlines. "I came in on 22nd September when a lot of suppliers had already closed their books for Christmas. I would also enjoy it more!"



# SHOWING OFF

## Charles Campion looks forward to the 2016 showing season

There's nothing quite like the frisson of excitement that floods through you when you get your first invitation to judge. The door mat is braced for the thump of a fat letter from the chief steward and as you wait for the postman, the power courses through your veins. Whether it is the Bonniest Baby class at your local village show, or deciding on the supreme champion at the British Cheese Awards, judging has an addictive charm. But with power comes responsibility – pinning the winner's rosette on the bounciest baby may win you the lasting admiration of one pretty young mum but it also makes you the sworn enemy of all the other mums whose babies did not win. Village shows are a law unto themselves. One year my chutney got second place having been narrowly beaten by the jar entered by the Pickles and Preserves Judge who rather naturally preferred her own. It's no good crying "fix", you just have to wait for next year, when the same indignity may well repeat itself.

There is something very charming about traditional agricultural shows, with their perky Tamworth pigs, huge beef cattle rippling with muscle, serried ranks of cages crammed with noisy poultry, marquees full of fine cheeses, demi-johns full of murky cider. For prospective judges, showing means dusting off the white coat and hat before assembling for the head judge's briefing. Anything that requires a uniform and an impractical white hat can't be all bad. Sadly, the classic agricultural shows are somewhat on the back foot; even 20 years ago the idea that farming's greatest showcase – the Royal Agricultural Society of England's annual show – might fold was far-fetched, but what was once a great institution is no more. Some shows are still thriving – the Royal Welsh (specialising in sheep, the Welsh language and hopeless parking arrangements); the Bath and West (new home of the British Cheese Awards); The International Cheese Awards (an enormous annual cheese show held at Nantwich); the Balmoral Show (a thriving showcase for the 2016 Northern Ireland Year of Food and Drink); the Royal Three Counties (at the foot of the beautiful Malvern Hills), and the Frome show (small but feisty, eccentric and charming, good cheese entry).

Once upon a time, the only chance that farmers and small producers got to see what their competitors were up to was to go to the local agricultural show. While machinery salesmen plied potential customers with hospitality, the merits of different breeds would be dissected by farmers



who might only meet once a year. During the showing season, anyone with a decent pig or a fine bull would be on the road collecting rosettes and championships in the hope that their success would be remembered when other farmers choose where to buy their young stock. This strategy means that the shows assume a greater importance and a "stop at nothing attitude" with plenty of skulduggery. An old friend of mine – now sadly no longer with us – who used to show Tamworth pigs (they are the large and lively ginger ones that are better escapologists than Houdini) confessed that some of his success was due to slipping his champion sows a homeopathic remedy to calm them before the show ring. The trick, he would say, was to hide the pills in bananas... apparently pigs love bananas. You learn something new every day.

I am particularly fond of the cheese shows. The cheese judges are a strange contingent; there are passionate amateurs – people who have given up sensible careers to make their own cheese, dedicated cheesemongers who understand their customers' palates, and fierce professionals who have worked as consultants to the dairy industry for 30 years or more and really do know what they are talking about. What's great about the cheese judges is that they all "play nicely" and are happy to share their knowledge with the newest of newcomers. But be prepared for the Head Judge to test your metal; there is an unwritten ranking of the classes and as a newbie you won't be asked to judge Farmhouse Cheddars or Stilton. What you'll get is "new cheese with additives." But it is worth suffering a dose of White Stilton with chilli if it secures you that all-important invitation to judge again? As a judge you can learn a prodigious amount about cheese and dress up in a white coat into the bargain. Later, as you progress, you can hint to your loved ones that a cheese iron would be the perfect birthday present. The iron is a grand piece of obscure and specialist kit, as there is absolutely nothing you can do with a cheese iron except iron cheeses! Across the country judges are polishing their cheese irons in the hope that 2016 will a good year. I for one can't wait.



CAKE AWAITING JUDGEMENT AT AN AGRICULTURAL SHOW



JUDGES IN ACTION AT THE BRITISH CHEESE AWARDS



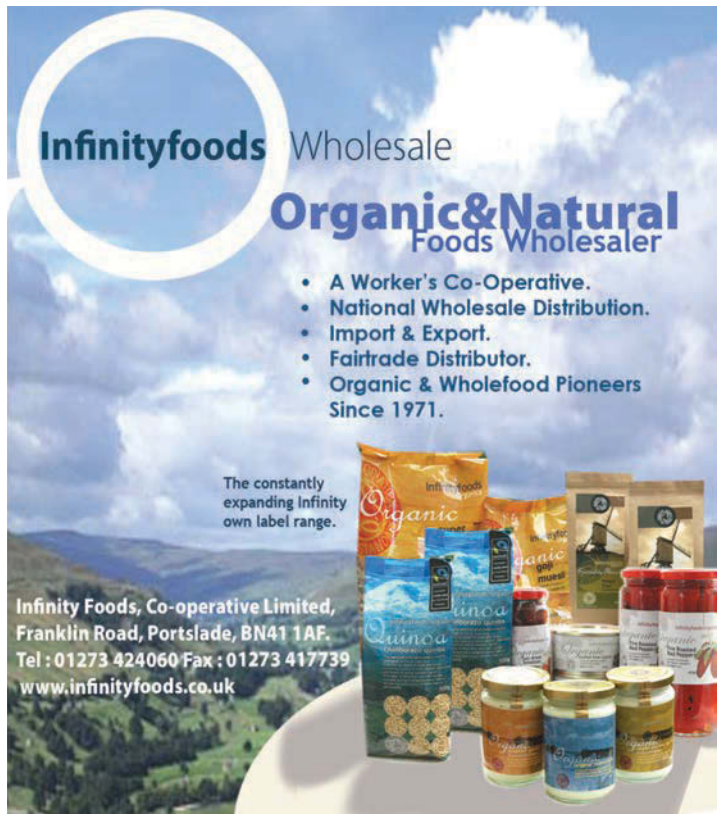
PIGS BEING JUDGED AT THE GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOW CREDIT: CHRIS2766

> Cheese judges are a strange contingent, there are passionate amateurs – people who have given up sensible careers to make their own cheese, dedicated cheesemongers who understand their customers' palates, and fierce professionals who have worked as consultants to the dairy industry for 30 years or more and really do know what they are talking about



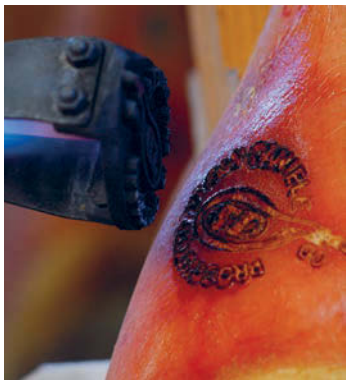














# SAN DANIELE

## For thousands of years, San Daniele prosciutto has been the pride of the mountainous region of Italy which it calls home. Daniela Celledoni of Consorzio del Prosciutto di San Daniele explains what makes this traditional delicacy so special

The story of San Daniele begins over two thousand years ago, when the Romans began to make prosciutto in the San Daniele area. They had discovered that by keeping pork meat during winter at cold temperatures under salt they could preserve the meat for the entire year ahead. At that time, keeping food to last a long time was a major issue as, needless to say, there was no refrigeration! This was, and is, possible because of various factors. The microclimate of the geographical area is unique; it's midway between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, where the cool breezes from the mountains meet the warm breezes from the sea. The area is on top of a hill with morainic soil so the water drains easily, and there is a main river beside this hill. All these things work together to form a particular microclimate which is the ideal combination of temperature, humidity and ventilation for maturing meat.

Today, the production process is still the same that it always has been – the technology has evolved, but is only used to keep the temperature consistent throughout the year. Prosciutto di San Daniele is made using only meat, salt and the unique natural atmosphere. There are lots of details which determine the quality of the end product – for example the legs must be fresh. The process begins with the salting, the duration of which is dependent on the weight of the legs. The salt is then washed away using warm water then the legs are kept hanging in the maturing rooms at a low temperature (0–4°C) for four months. This ensures that no bacteria remains. After four months the legs are kept in different maturing rooms which have gradually increasing temperatures until they reach ambient temperature. The minimum maturation period is 13 months, as per the product specifications. After this time, all the prosciuttos are carefully inspected by the controlling body, and if they meet all of the necessary requirements they will be marked with the San Daniele brand. This is a very important step, as up until this time they are not recognised as San Daniele prosciutto – this represents a lot for consumers as they know that all San Daniele prosciutto will meet that high level of quality and care as standard. The influence of the microclimate means that you need to keep the drying process gradual. 13 months in another microclimate would create a different prosciutto; San Daniele prosciutto is recognised to be very tender and delicate in taste with a fantastic balance of sweet and savoury, and it wouldn't be possible to create these qualities elsewhere. If it was produced in a drier climate, you would get a drier prosciutto with a more intense flavour. Another valuable element are the ingredients used – Prosciutto di San Daniele is made using the legs of Italian pigs born and raised exclusively in 10 different regions across northern and central Italy. It's this dedication to quality and detail which have earned San Daniele prosciutto PDO status.

We have a number of documents which show that since it was first created San Daniele has been a highly prized food. In the fifteenth century the prosciutto was used like money – there are written contracts where people paid friends or renters for houses or land with San Daniele prosciutto, and we have proof that it was enjoyed by the nobility and royal families across Europe. It continues to enjoy a reputation for quality today.



### HOW TO **SELL**

**San Daniele can be supplied whole on the bone as a whole leg, which can be sliced with a knife and be deboned by the retailer. The easiest way to slice is using a slicing machine on a deboned leg. A tradition of San Daniele prosciutto is to include the trotter on the leg which makes it different to Prosciutto di Parma, but the deboned San Daniele prosciutto has had the bone and trotter removed for ease of use on the slicing machine. The leg can also be provided in three of four sections, all of which must carry the identification mark, or they can be supplied pre-sliced and contained in a modified atmosphere pack.**

### HOW TO SERVE

**San Daniele prosciutto is a very delicate product, so once it has been sliced it must be eaten within 24 hours otherwise it starts to lose its flavour and tenderness.** If you buy it pre-sliced there are no problems so long as the packet is opened three to four minutes before serving so it can breathe – similarly to wine – and it needs to be eaten within one day to preserve its true nature.

**FOOD**

One of the best ways to serve San Daniele prosciutto is with bread and other gently flavoured foods in order to not overpower its delicate taste. It goes very well with fruits such as melon, fresh figs, apple and pineapple, and with salads. A chef once told me that it goes well with all yellow fruits. A number of wines go well with San Daniele prosciutto, but it's best served with wines which don't have too strong a flavour.

**WINE**

White wines work best, especially those with an acid base such as sauvignon, pinot and a local wine called friulana, prosecco and rosé. Reds are a bit harder to match as it won't work with anything that's too strong or aged. It goes well with a light pinot noir or merlot.

**RECIPES**

You can also use it in other recipes, although it's not particularly suitable for cooking. A traditional way to serve it is in a pasta sauce with fresh prosciutto on top. There are a lot of recipes which include lightly cooked San Daniele prosciutto, but it's worth bearing in mind that by cooking it you lose the tenderness and the flavour becomes much more intense. The basic principle is to not pair it with strong tastes – no vinegar or pickles, for example.

> "San Daniele is created by 31 producers, all of whom work to very high standards to ensure a special product"



ZEDDY ROTICH (38 YEARS) IS A COFFEE FARMER AND MEMBER OF KABNGETUNY WOMEN IN COFFEE IN KERICHO COUNTY KENYA. COPYRIGHT FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL. PHOTOGRAPHER: DAVID MACHARIA.

# WHY STOCK FAIRTRADE?

## Fairtrade is a perfect idea in principal, but not everyone is convinced it attracts custom for provincial independents

Fairtrade seems a perfect idea in principle and its logo is increasingly seen on coffee, bananas, chocolate and other items in supermarkets. But is Fairtrade gaining in acceptance? Should you be stocking Fairtrade not only on ethical grounds but because of increased demand? "With an ever-growing ethical consumer market in the UK, stocking fair and sustainable local and international produce is win-win for businesses," says Tim Aldred, head of policy and research at the Fairtrade Foundation. "Offering customers popular, high quality goods such as Divine chocolate, Clipper Tea and Fairtrade coffee and bananas gives them the knowledge that their purchases support farming communities in developing countries with a fairer deal."

One Fairtrade brand hopeful about the future is Liberation Foods, whose Liberation Nuts are aimed at the independent retail trade. "The market has seen incredible growth in the 11 years I have worked in Fairtrade sector," says Kate Gaskell, Liberation's managing director. "Trade has flattened off in the last couple of years but this is because big increases such as we have seen can't be sustained and it's also because of what has been happening in the supermarket sector, with people favouring the cost-cutting supermarkets who stock less Fairtrade." At present, Kate says, "the trade in nuts is tiny compared to coffee, bananas and chocolate so there is plenty more growing to do."



"Liberation Foods is a farmer-owned Fairtrade company set up in 2007, whose sister companies are Divine Chocolate and Cafédirect. "The company exists because communities or small holders of nut farmers from various parts of the world got together to find a different way to bring their products to market and create their own company," Kate says. They own 44% of the market and the rest is owned by philanthropic shareholders who are committed to the mission of the company, which is to grow the market of the smallholder, produce nuts and improve the livelihoods of people who live in the communities which grow them."

Fairtrade brands can be innovative and well packaged. Liberation's "Get Up and Glow" nut cocktail range includes a variety which teams nuts with pear, dark chocolate and ginger. Some of Liberation's creations are inspired by inspired by their nuts' countries of origin. Their best-seller just now, Kate says, is "the lime chilli combo roasted cashews mixed with salted peanuts and crunchy corn, which was inspired by Nicaragua, where most of our peanuts are grown." The company has recently launched a range of three 'on-the-go' size products, the Get Up and Glow (with seeds and Goji berries) Up and At 'Em and Give Me Strength (nut cocktail range).

The Fairtrade premium should not deter retailers from stocking Fairtrade, Kate says, as it is a relatively small part of the price. Liberation keeps prices down with a small supply chain and fewer people involved. Also, Kate, says, "we don't take greedy margins!" Stocking Fairtrade, she says, gives retailers "another point of difference" and the customer "another reason to visit their shop. It's a talking point, too."

### Retailer's perspective

Large concerns such as the Rhug Estate are enthusiastic supporters of Fairtrade. Owner Lord Newborough says, "as part of our ethos here at Rhug Farm Shop, we've always stocked a variety of Fairtrade products, including coffees, teas, hot chocolates and a range of heavenly chocolates." The essence of Fairtrade, he says, is "that it comprises minimum social, economic and environmental requirement, which are all part of our ethos here at Rhug."



At the Norfolk Deli, owner Mark Kacary offers the smaller retailer's perspective. He stocks "a few items under the Fairtrade banner, some coffee beans, chocolate and fruit." Possibly, he says, "we do not stock as much Fairtrade as many people would expect or imagine that we would, but that is probably because the majority of the products we stock are from local producers who are using local produce."

Stocking Fairtrade isn't "necessarily a conscious decision" he says. "In many ways the principles we follow are the principles of the Slow Food movement where we seek to support local producers, who make well-made produce from the best quality produce. If it so happens that the local producer is sourcing their raw ingredients from a Fairtrade source, then the decision to sell Fairtrade is not one we actively pursued. It is however a principle of the Slow Food Movement, so in many ways producers who fall under this category will necessarily tend to have a higher level of Fairtrade ingredients in their produce."

As a deli owner operating to strict budgets, Mark doesn't "necessarily believe in selling produce simply because it is a Fairtrade product. Just because the principles of Fairtrade exist in the growing and purchasing of produce doesn't automatically mean that the produce is going to be of a superior quality to anything else," he says. "It is key to us that what we sell is of the highest possible quality. If it happens that Fairtrade ingredients were included, then that helps. On the whole, we rarely if ever have anybody asking us if the product they have picked up is a Fairtrade product. With our shoppers this is of less importance than it might be in some locations."

> "With an ever-growing ethical consumer market in the UK, stocking fair and sustainable local and international produce is win-win for businesses"







# TIME FOR **TEA**

## The speciality tea world may be ever-evolving, but traditional flavours are still as popular as ever

Across the speciality food and drink sector, consumers are looking for three things: quality, great taste and a story. Whether that story be based around a family of tea lovers (as in the case of Twinings) or a tale telling the story behind the creation of a unique product, these days discerning customers appreciate both retailers and producers making the extra effort to give background to the product they're trying to sell.

Tea sellers have a head start in this regard, with the plants being grown either in exotic climates or – unusually – closer to home, as in the case of Dalreoch Estate teas which have been cultivated in Perthshire, Scotland. Another example of a tea producer with a tale to tell is Summerdown Mint, which is rightly proud of its tea's unique history. Here, we speak to Anthony Terry from Summerdown to find out more about the brand's award-winning peppermint tea, as well as to Rupert Titchmarsh of Hider Foods in order to discover both what's selling well and what's to come in the speciality tea sector.



**Anthony Terry of Summerdown Mint Teas shares the story of the brand's best-selling tea**

England was once renowned for producing the best mint in the world – the French still call peppermint menthe anglaise, or English mint. However, over the years, pressure to grow food crops and the rising cost of labour brought about a decline in cultivation.

From the 1990s, it took Summerdown more than a decade to bring traditional Black Mitcham peppermint home to the UK – from the US – and revive the clean, fresh taste of English peppermint for the 21st century. When the mint fields have been harvested, the leaves are taken to Summerdown's purpose built distillery. The result is a rare single estate peppermint oil, with consistent quality and a soft, smooth, lingering taste. Our dried peppermint tea leaves are infused with this oil before being made up into tea bags.

Summerdown peppermint tea contains only pure Black Mitcham mint leaf and oil, with an aromatic flavour that is truly unusual and different – a refreshing alternative to many herbal teas. It is also a three-star Great Taste award-winner.

As an addition to the range, Summerdown produces an English spearmint and camomile tea. The camomile is dried and infused with pure spearmint oil, also distilled on the farm and also an award-winner!

## FROM THE **DISTRIBUTOR...**



**Rupert Titchmarsh, brand manager at Hider Foods**

**WHAT TEAS ARE ON YOUR BOOKS?**

We supply the staples including Twinings, Teapigs, Taylors of Harrogate, Hampstead Tea, Jacksons of Piccadilly and The English Tea Company. Although Teapigs is now a very large business, we stock them as they have a selection of really lovely flavours – liquorice and fennel are consistently good-selling flavours. We also sell chilled teas, largely from Hampstead Teas which are also popular.

**WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR?**

Our most popular tea brands are Taylors and Twinings – customers at top-end delis and food halls still want these recognisable brands despite their affiliation with the major multiples. I put this down to the fact that they are part of a select group of brands which seem to manage to straddle both the independent range and the supermarkets without any damage to their brand. Belvoir and Tyrrells are other examples of this – companies which are still as popular in independents as they ever have been, despite also supplying the multiples.

**WHAT'S NEW?**

I wouldn't say that consumer tastes in tea have particularly changed in recent times – 2015 was the year of tea, with a lot of brands coming out of the woodwork. Consumer interest in traditional teas and the more unusual options are growing; last year I judged at an event where a producer gave us tea and empty tea sachets to create our own teabags whilst listening to music designed to suit the tea we were using. The brand took it to the nth degree and it's a great product, but possibly too obscure for us. The tea market is incredibly competitive, and we get approached constantly by new tea producers. In the future I believe that we're going to see a lot of these new tea brands either disappearing or being swallowed up by larger companies.

> "The tea market is incredibly competitive, and we get approached constantly by new tea producers"

## STOCK CHECK




**TEAPIGS CHOCOLATE & MINT**

A classic combination. We have put together our finest peppermint leaves and added chocolate pieces to deliver a slightly indulgent drink with three calories per cup.

**teapigs.co.uk**




**TG GREEN TEA WITH JUJUBE & OSMANTHUS**

Tg's pure green tea comes in two blends using special fruit and botanicals, some familiar and some excitingly new to us including the Jujube superfruit.

**drinktg.com**




**HAMPSTEAD TEA STRONG ENGLISH BREAKFAST**

A bold, full blend with malty tones and a refreshing robustness.

**hampsteadtea.com**




**SUMMERDOWN MINT PEPPERMINT TEA**

Bright, fresh and aromatic, this is mint as your great-grandparents knew it – a taste that has been lost for generations.

**summerdownmint.com**




**CHASH TEA STRAWBERRIES IN SUMMER**

A delicious mix of strawberries, apple, hibiscus, orange, blackberry leaf and raspberries.

**chashtea.co.uk**




**JOE'S TEA PROPER PEPPERMINT**

Brew those cobwebs away and keep it pure with a cup of organic peppermint.

**joesteacompany.com**



# HOT WAYS TO KEEP COOL

## If you plan to sell chilled foods online, effective temperature-controlled packaging is essential. We look at solutions from three companies specialising in this



A DAIRY APPLICATION FOR SORBAFREEZE



Sorbafreeze has been catering to the needs of people who depend on transiting food at a low temperature since 1990. "We produce one key product in a variety of forms," says Dan Yeats, operations manager.

"The product is silver foil on one side and a woven polyester fabric on the other. These are heat-sealed together with a polyacrylic powder inside which swells up when it is in contact with water. This main product comes in different sized sheets and configurations depending on how it's being used, whether it is being employed as a box or container, or a table spread to keep things cold at fairs and shows."

Sorbafreeze solutions were "initially designed in response to a request from the local fish processing industry who wanted to keep food cold in transit," Dan says, "but demand has expanded and it is now used in farm shops and delis and for anything which needs to be transited which doesn't have the kind of scale that requires refrigerated transport." One of the product's major uses is in mail order, where it has proven highly efficient especially for "cheeses, cold meat, fish and shellfish. People also use these sheets as a base layer for chilled displays."

The benefit of a gel, Dan says, "is that when it defrosts over time it holds much of its cold temperature. Some of the water-based ones go back to room temperature. In these conditions, this one will still be between seven and 10 degrees." Set against other solutions such as dry ice," he says, "it's a much safer, less hazardous option. Against the pre-sold water or gel alternatives, the main point is that we sell the product in the powder form and you hydrate it yourself." Sorbafreeze is a good option for the space-conscious. " One box of our product is equivalent to about a pallet load of pre-filled either hydrated or water-based," Dan says.

The concept is very efficient, he adds. "Once you have hydrated and frozen it, the pad will stay cold for at least 48 hours and when it does finally defrost, it will retain much of its cold temperature. It can then be re-soaked and refrozen then re-used. Products such as this often aren't re-used because of food contact, but you can put ours in polythene sleeves and use them again and again. You might retain for home use or picnics, too." Sorbafreeze is environmentally friendly, he says, as "the constituent parts can easily be broken down and then recycled."

The product is ideal for use in farm shops and delis, he says. "It's quick, it's not branded and it can be economical on storage and delivery. If kept in its polythene liner, it can be kept up to a year before it is used." Sorbafreeze's best-selling product is "probably our 40g roll, which is two 60m rolls in a box. This is perforated, which means it can be torn off as required, making it a very flexible option for a new company compared to pre-cut sheets." The minimum order is a single box , which can usually be delivered next day if ordered before 12 noon.

### Boxes, bags and envelopes



Alternative tried and tested solutions for those looking to keep food reliably chilled in transit are temperature controlled boxes, envelopes and carrier bags such as those produced by Hydropac. Sales manager Adam Hart says that Hydropac's range is both recyclable and environmentally friendly. Alongside these core products, he says, Hydropac also produces "a range of temperature- controlling water, gel and ice sheets and water-based ice packs that people freeze down and then place inside a box or or envelopes to hold the food at the right temperature."

Hydropac's products can help people who want to sell their food online, Adam says. With Hydropac's products, food can be "held at the correct temperature while it is being delivered in one of our boxes to







customers anywhere in the country. The envelopes work in exactly the same way. Smoked salmon or a couple of steaks in an envelope work very well. If you are sending a turkey then the solution is one of our boxes.'' The company can also provide insulated carrier bags. ''These will keep the food cold for five hours or more while customers are travelling home. There is a growing market for them at delis and farm shops.'' The bags are also useful for producers who exhibit at farmers markets.

Hydropac can provide ''any design work that's needed. A product can be designed to a specific size, shape or time temperature requirement. If somebody says they have a three kilo pack of food that they need to keep at below five degrees for 48 hours, we can design that to their requirement as well. We also provide artistic design. Any of the products, bags, boxes, envelopes or ice packs can be branded with the company name, logo and images.''

Hydropac pre-tests and certifies everything to hold fridge temperature. This, Adam says, has a ''best practice of below five degrees, but realistically a fridge would run between two and eight degrees. We ensure that all our products comply with any legislation in regards to holding food at the correct temperature while it is being distributed.''

The products are very economical with space, Adam says. ''The bags and the envelopes are flat to start with, the boxes fold flat, the insulated liner lifts out and obviously the outer cardboard box folds flat too. The boxes can be assembled in a couple of seconds. The transited food will be held at the correct temperature and well-presented. We try and make it all look more like a gift when it turns up. Quite often that box is the first impression customers will have of the company. If it turns up looking a bit dishevelled, they are not going to want to take it into their house.''

Hydropac's products are produced from recycled materials, he says. ''The outer box is made from cardboard which is round about 90% recycled, the insulating liners are produced from lope which is the world's most recycled form of plastic – they are approximately 60-70% recycled polymer – and we have to have at least 30% virgin polymer in there so everything is certified food safe.''

All items are held in stock. ''In the case of plain, unbranded items,'' Adam says, ''if we are contacted by lunchtime, we would generally despatch that afternoon. We keep minimum orders low in order to help the small independent retailers.''




HYDROPAC'S RANGE

## BOXING **CLEVER**

### Lynda McInally, customer services officer of JB Packaging explains the advantages of insulated polystyrene boxes, and introduces her company which specialises in their production

**TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT THE COMPANY**

JB Packaging was formed over 30 years ago to supply the fishing industry in the South West of England with insulated polystyrene boxes. We wanted to expand to supplying meat, fish and organic producers all over the country. As the internet was becoming very popular for small business like farm shops to send their produce out for home delivery, we launched our online shop. We have grown with a lot of businesses because we can supply just one box for them to try or parcels, pallets and truck loads. Our priority is to ensure our customers have excellent service and want to stay with us.



JB PACKAGING POLYSTYRENE BOX

**TELL ME ABOUT YOUR RANGE AND ITS USES**

EPS (expanded polystyrene) is 98% fresh air. Therefore, it is very light to transport and has excellent thermal properties. We have a range of 25 polystyrene boxes and lids, of which 12 can be purchased with outer corrugated boxes. We offer seven deluxe reusable boxes (EPP) which can be used for applications such as meals on wheels, or taking products to fairs and markets.

Our hot and cold carriers with a shoulder strap once again are ideal for selling products from the box. They are especially good for icecream. The new foldable flip box is good for transporting frozen or chilled goods in the car. We supply hydrated and non-hydrated pads as ice mediums and supply a range of ancillary goods which complement the products, including a range of waxed cartons generally employed when a refrigerated vehicle is used. Most sorts of foods can be sent in these types of packaging.

**HOW DO POLYSTYRENE BOXES STAND UP AGAINST OTHER METHODS OF TEMPERATURE CONTROLLED PACKAGING?**

Our polystyrene boxes have been tested to show they are the most effective shipping option for transporting fresh fish.

**WHAT ARE THEIR ADVANTAGES FOR INDEPENDENT FOOD RETAILERS?**

Food companies do not need to use refrigerated vehicles if the food is packed and delivered within a designated time-scale.

**WHY SHOULD RETAILERS CHOOSE THIS OVER OTHER OPTIONS?**

Low cost of boxes and versatility.

**TELL ME ABOUT YOUR PRODUCTS' GREEN CREDENTIALS.**

The box may be reused or recycled after delivery.

**HOW ARE THE BOXES TESTED?**

The boxes are designed to withstand being stacked to the height of 2000mm on a pallet.

**HOW FOOD SAFE ARE THEY?**

Expandable polystyrene from our raw material suppliers complies with European Union food contact regulations.

**TELL ME ABOUT YOUR REUSABLE OPTIONS**

Deluxe boxes and flip boxes are ideal for multiple trips. They are made from expanded polypropylene (EPP), which is a much more durable material and is used in automotive impact protection.

**HOW VIABLE IS THIS OPTION, ECONOMICALLY?**

EPP material can be cleaned in dishwashers and multiple trip use saves on costs. The boxes do not have to be replaced for many years (dependent upon use and handling).

**DO YOU OFFER ANY OTHER SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS?**

We offer support advice on choosing the correct box and ice for purpose.

**IS THERE A MINIMUM ORDER?**

No. Customers may buy just one box.






# FROZEN FOOD: THE COLD FACTS

## It's cold but is it cool? Frozen food's image is very different when it comes to the independent sector

If frozen food had a heyday, that time has come and almost gone, at least as far as more aspirational supermarket shoppers are concerned. While it's acknowledged that frozen vegetables retain their nutrients, food from the freezer lacks cachet and the quality of many products is not always what it might be. But shoppers who confine their frozen food buying to the odd packet of peas in the supermarkets are apt to behave differently at the local farm shop or deli, where the freezer cabinet is often stocked with homemade ready meals, farm-raised and provenance assured meat, locally-grown veg, artisanally-made ice cream and time-saving cooking solutions such as ready-made doughs. Farm shop frozen food can be a lifesaver for the customer in a hurry and a welcome footfall finder for the retailer.

"Independents look for quality products that will sell well but also give their customers real value for money," says Sally Newall, managing director of Simply Ice Cream Ltd, which produces a range of 32 flavours. "People regard frozen food sold in the independents in a different light." The quality of Sally's frozen product is reflected in the care that is put into making it. "Our production team still make the ice cream by hand in small batches." Another producer supplying independents with frozen food products is Fry's Family Foods. Tammy Fry, international marketing director, says "freezing is still the best way of preserving food and as Fry's pre-cooks before freezing, consumers are able to prepare a meal within eight minutes from the freezer." The company offers "family-based ethical solutions to the meat-free category, including the new Nature's Plant Protein range." The range is especially suitable for farm shops and delis, she says, because of "pack size and price, plus we have a national partnership with various independent wholesalers who provide small drop sizes and promotional activities for the independent trade."

### Premium quality

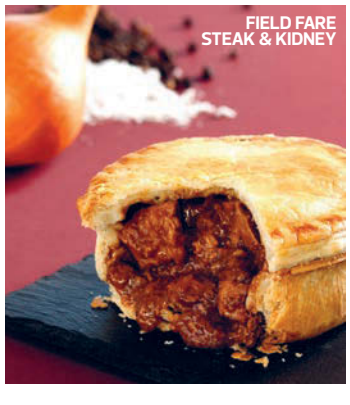
A prominent brand specialising in frozen foods for the farm shop and deli market is field fare, the trading name of Agra Freeze Ltd, an independent, family business which produces "an extensive range of freshly frozen fruits, vegetables, ready meals, fish and bakery lines," says managing director Karen Deans. "We are pioneers of the unique 'scoop your own' concept where customers are able to buy their food 'loose,' meaning customers choose how much they buy." This offers the benefits of "minimal packaging and no food waste. Some of our more recent launches are sold pre-packed, such as our ready meal range."

Wherever possible, Karen says, "we try to source local British ingredients in order to achieve premium quality. The meat used in our ready meals is British, as too are a number of our fruits. Our peas and potatoes are from Yorkshire, our fish cakes and Coquille St Jacques are from Devon and our various meat pies and fruit puddings are made by a family company in Kent. If we need to go a little further afield to source an ingredient, this is to ensure we have a top quality, and absolutely authentic product."

Unlike supermarket frozen foods, suppliers of frozen food for independent retailers have a much more homemade feel. "We aim to use small, family-run businesses where they take great pride in the little touches that distinguish our range from mass-produced frozen food," Karen says. "Our pies are produced by a small business using prime cuts of meat in traditional family recipes. Recipes have been inspired from around the world with products such as Green Thai Chicken Curry, Lamb Tagine, Lasagne Verde, Meatballs Pomodoro, Lancashire Hotpot and Venison and Roasted Vegetable Casserole. These really are at the 'top end' when it comes to quality and taste homemade, but offer the convenience required from a ready prepared meal."

The products are a good fit with farm shops and delis. "We have a comprehensive range of high quality products that complement farm






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samples available to purchase - no minimum order quantity
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COLOURFUL FLAVOUR FROM SIMPLY ICE CREAM

shops and delis' existing fresh ranges," Karen says. "We enable retailers to offer fruit and vegetables that may not be in season and having such a large range of field fare products also means retailers are able to simplify the buying process as they only need to deal with one supplier. We offer branding for freezers, recipe inspired backboards, POS labels and marketing support. Having a dedicated field fare branded freezer (or a minimum of two as we recommend) has been proven to help increase sales and encourage customers to repeat purchase."

Karen agrees that food sold in farm shops and delis is seen in a different light to that on sale on the multiples. "There has been a perception of frozen food being the poor relation of fresh food, especially in the supermarkets," she says. "This is not the case with farm shops and delis, which are renowned for sourcing products from local, smaller suppliers that do not produce on mass and are a little bit different and of premium quality. Frozen foods has seen an increase in popularity as more consumers understand that freezing food actually locks in nutritional goodness, fresh flavours and natural textures."

## Ready meals

At Ardross Farm Shop, partner manager Claire Pollock sells frozen food because "our customers asked for it. Two local butchers once remarked that they would love to sell as much frozen as we do, but it is completely customer driven. We possibly sell a third of our beef fresh and two thirds frozen. Some of our customers travel quite long distances to stock up their freezers with our products." As well as the meat, the shop sells a range of frozen foods, including ready meals. "Most of these are home produced," Claire says, "and we prefer to sell them frozen as it means we can cook them just as my granny would have done, with no added additives or preservatives. These meals include soups, mince rounds, steak pies, chilli and mince pots. However, we continue this principle into many other things we produce ourselves, for example coulis, stocks and blinis." At Jimmy's Farm, frozen ready meals are on sale in the farm shop. "We do homemade pies and desserts but these are really special," says Tanja Sadler, general manager. "These are like home-made pies which you put in the freezer. They are not specifically made as frozen products. I think there is always a place for some frozen food because of people's time-stretched lifestyles. It's difficult to make everything from scratch every single day."

Also popular with the independent market are the ready meals produced by COOK, whose branded chillers are to be found in many farm shops. "We have built a loyal fan base of customers who keep coming back for more, as our range isn't available in the 'big four' supermarkets (and never will be)," says Chris Portwood, head of COOK concessions. "Retailers find that COOK creates a lot of destinational footfall for their business as people will travel relatively long distances to stock up. We are also careful not to supply retailers too close together so that this effect is maximised."

COOK operates "a very simple modular branded concession system," Chris says. "The minimum range of best selling meals fits into two 1.7m chest freezers, which we clad with attractive point of sale materials and help the retailer set up in store. There are various different models depending on the space retailers can dedicate to it, with the largest being a 'super concession' which effectively offers most of the range you would find in one of our own shops including entertaining dishes, large puddings and food for kids. Once it's up and running, it's relatively easy to manage, with no wastage as it's all frozen."

Frozen food aimed at the independent sector can be innovative, too. Offering uniquely marinated products in eye-catching packaging is the BigFish Brand. The founder and managing director of JCS Fish (BigFish Brand) is Andrew Coulbeck, who explains that the core product of BigFish Brand "is a range of added-value frozen salmon fillets with flavoured marinades, sold as highly convenient, individually-wrapped fillets. They're rich in protein and Omega3 and easy to prepare – from freezer to table in just a few minutes. We like to say that our salmon is the ultimate demonstration that 'frozen is the new fresh.'"


COOK'S CHICKEN, HAM & LEAK PIE

## STOCK CHECK 2016 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE




### BIG FISH SMOKED HADDOCK FISHCAKES

Luxury smoked haddock fishcakes created with the finest ingredients including spring onion and cheese.
**bigfishbrand.co.uk**




### TASTE DIRECT VANILLA MUFFIN MIXTURE

One of the Baking Agent range which is a frozen home baking range for the speciality retail market.
**taste-direct.com**




### SIMPLY ICE CREAM HEAVENLY

Simply Ice Cream's Honeycomb Crunch is an indulgent mixing of deliciously thick ice cream with sweet crunchy honeycomb.
**simplyicecream.co.uk**




### NORTHERN DOUGH CO PIZZA DOUGH

Frozen ready to roll pizza dough made with natural ingredients
**northerndoughco.com**






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Last Words

the final word of fine food

# Don Street Deli, Jersey

**Owner:** Shaun Rankin **Opened:** December 2013




**HOW'S BUSINESS?**
Growth has been pretty prolific in the deli since it opened. The first year was an important time to analyse our retail product selection and offering. Since then, items have been trialled and refined to ensure great product meets customer satisfaction. The lunch trade has become especially successful. The business model was originally built around the pick up trade, however it's grown to service the corporate market through delivery, too. There is always a great buzz in the deli, with regular footfall and busy lunch periods; we've now added another row of seating to accommodate this.

**DESCRIBE YOUR DELI**
The deli was created to work in synergy with Ormer, my adjacent Michelin star restaurant. We stock Ormer wines and desserts, alongside many other hard to source artisan products such as truffles, artisan ham and homemade relishes. Don Street Deli combines both luxury retail and fresh, exceptional food offerings prepared for the breakfast and lunch trade.

**WHAT MAKES DON ST DELI UNUSUAL OR SPECIAL?**
Products are carefully sourced from artisan producers, smallholders and local farmers and fishermen. There is also a great range of products from exceptional European brands. Fundamentally, the centrepiece of the deli is the wood-fired oven – the only one on Jersey. The oven is utilised for baking artisan breads, rolls and pastry items every day. It is also used to cook flatbreads and the already famous smoked bacon rolls (winner of Best Bacon Roll in Jersey!).

**IS AN ISLAND LOCATION HELPFUL OR NOT?**
The countryside and shorelines of Jersey and the other Channel Islands offer world-class ingredients and the freshest produce. Since moving here in 1994, I have learnt so much about locality, seasonality and the art of foraging. It's a great place to source the freshest produce, going from field to fork within a matter of hours. The obstacle comes with sourcing products that we do not have on Island and shipping them in in a timely manner – the weather can affect our accessibility dramatically. This is why I have honed supply chains and made it easier to import special items.

**WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS?**
Local residents make up a large proportion of our customer base followed by tourists who are also vital to the business. There are many customers who pop in for their regular coffee and lunch break, as well as those seeking quality gifts for friends or colleagues. We have built a large customer base through local companies who regularly use the deli to provide boardroom lunches and canapés for business seminars and also for events.

**HOW DO YOU CATER FOR THEIR TASTES?**
At Don Street Deli we have regular interaction with both the producers and customers, which means the team are aware of popular food and customer preferences. This contact increases the customer's knowledge of the product range and we are able to assist and educate the customer according to their preferences and encourage them to recommend their favourite products. Our team also keep customers up to date on social media with any new products and services and there are always daily samples of food for customers to try for free. The staff aim to provide a flexible service and the blackboard always reads 'Tell us what you want and we will make it'. No request is too large or small, which ensures that everyone's taste is satisfied.

**HOW DID YOU BECOME A DELI OWNER?**
After opening Ormer restaurant in Jersey, Don Street Deli evolved organically and was the next step to further the quality of the customer's culinary experience. The deli is a great way to allow customers to enjoy quality artisan products on the go and in their own home. It is also important to me that I am able to invest further in Jersey's culinary offering and build a brand that does as much as it can to support quality suppliers both locally and in Europe.

**WHAT INFORMS YOUR STOCKING DECISIONS?**
We will only work with companies and products which are synonymous with the quality of the existing brand. I have a huge respect for growing, rearing and creating world class produce. We combine local suppliers including Jon Hackett (a local pork rearer) and Louis Jackson (The Fresh Company) with specialist overseas suppliers including Giuseppe Giusti, who have been making Aceto Balsamico in Italy for over four centuries. Many of the products in the deli are not available anywhere else in Jersey and the majority are sourced directly from suppliers in their respective countries rather than through a third party.



Richard Fox

## "Stop That Pigeon"

**Perhaps Dick Dasterdly and Muttley were displaying unexpected gourmet insight in their hapless attempts to stop Yankee Doodle Pigeon in Hanna-Barbera Productions' iconic cartoon series, Dastardly and Muttley.** Pigeon is, without doubt, one of my favourite birds to both cook and eat – not least because it can be cooked in the time it takes to boil the kettle. Unfortunately it seems to suffer the same fate as other less familiar feathered friends when competing for shelf space alongside the more populist birds which dominate our baskets and diets. It's that fear of the unknown rearing its ugly head again which simply serves to deprive us of great value flavour. Perhaps, like Dastardly and Muttley, our humble pigeon is simply suffering from an image problem due to its city-dwelling, pavement-scavenging skanky cousin. The truth is, it couldn't be further removed in terms of good taste and lifestyle. The edible wood pigeon with its diet of pastoral grain and country living is as likely to share the same living space with its urban namesake as The Dalai Lama and Justin Bieber.

It's certainly quicker and easier to joint than a chicken and while the legs and thighs may not offer anything up in terms of meat yield, they certainly compensate on the flavour stakes for a stock. And this brings me to my favourite way to cook the little fella: having removed the breasts (keeping the skin on), the carcass and thighs will make a delicious game sauce in under half an hour. A couple of minutes of flash frying of the breasts, followed by the obligatory resting; a tasty toasted flat bread and a bunch of watercress, and you have the makings for one of my favourite open sandwiches.

And there we have the wood pigeon – a truly free-range bird without an eye-watering price tag, or a requirement for a Michelin starred training to cook it. While availability seems to be the main issue with these little bundles of flavour, the good news is, they freeze perfectly.

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# SPECIALITY BITES

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



At the risk of sounding clichéd, it is people that make successful businesses, so, in order to be a successful business owner or manager, we clearly need to understand people. Many of the leaders of businesses in the speciality food sector are from the generation known as 'X' i.e. they are currently aged mid-thirties to early fifties. Yes, that includes me! Entrepreneurship, individualism, cynicism, disconnected, disdain for authority, educated and technologically adaptable would be some of their key characteristics. Recognise yourself? Many of our employees may also be 'Generation X' too, which may help us manage them if we are too.

However, 'Generation Y' (or 'Millennials') will, in five years or so, be the dominant generation within the UK workplace, being around 40% of the total workforce. And, perhaps more importantly, they will be the dominant consumers in another five years after that, so we need to understand them. Or, if you are aged between twenty and your mid-thirties, you need to understand yourselves! I am concentrating in this piece on Millennials in the workplace and will address Millennials as consumers on other occasions. So, what are Millennials looking for in their place of work?

Generally, Generation Y want to make the world a better place, so a company that has higher aims than simply making money is going to be attractive to them. Most of them would like to be their own boss, but if they are employed they want their boss to serve more as a mentor or coach rather than an instruction-issuer or worse, a dictator! The vast majority of Y-ers much prefer a collaborative work culture that than a competitive one. They want flexible work schedules and work-life integration, which is not the same as work-life balance, since work and life now blend together in this digital age.

> "What are Millennials looking for in their place of work? To make the world a better place"

In my experience they love responsibility and are very positive people to have within the workplace. If you are a Generation X boss you will have to give them more praise than you think you should, because they need it more than you do. And if they are given permission to go ahead with their idea, they'll be good at ensuring others are on board too.

One warning though; Millennials may be perceived as being disloyal or becoming bored too quickly. This may, however, be your fault as their manager. Keep them creating, give them responsibility and promotion wherever you can and you can keep them longer than the average time they are in a job – 18 months.

Sometimes, though, in a small company, you may just need to acknowledge the good work they have done for you, and send them with your blessing onto new challenges. Consider that job done!

At Cotswold Fayre we have staff awards at the end of each year, and I have realised whilst writing this that all three awards this year were won by Millennials and that all their names began with the letter A. The latter is just a strange coincidence, but the former, I strongly believe, is not.

# Best Practice

## Caroline Gould, events manager at Suffolk Food Hall tells her story



**I run the events department at Suffolk Food Hall so my role involves all events across the site including conferencing, cookery classes, special events, weddings and some of our larger scale events such as the Tractor Fair (pencil it in – 27th August 2016!), wedding open days and Christmas parties.** However, my background is in weddings and I have been in the industry locally, running my own business, for over 10 years. My role is to bring in new business, run the existing day-to-day business and manage the events team.

**For a lot of clients, especially when it comes to weddings and special events, they are entering a world they know nothing about, so I see it as part of my role to open their eyes to the work they are about to undertake and guide them through the process.** Because I've been in the events industry locally for so long I can recommend suppliers that fit with the clients' needs and, most importantly, their budget. In 2015 I won a national award for my wedding planning business in the Wedding Industry Awards. The awards are voted for by clients and judged by the industry. This accolade gives clients more peace of mind as hopefully it shows that I really do know what I'm talking about! Those skills transfer very easily to the corporate events side of the business, too.

**Suffolk Food Hall is a family-owned business and we have that approach to everything we do.** We are all about local produce and this is so important when it comes to events. Often for a corporate meeting or training day, lunch can be the part that delegates look forward to the most. Everything is made in-house where possible, so the biscuits for coffee breaks will probably have been baked that morning and the bread used for sandwiches will come from our own bakery. When it comes to larger weddings and special events, we offer a menu tasting which is hosted by our head chef with an opportunity to discuss a bespoke menu if required. Having an incredibly knowledgeable team means we can offer the very best service to our clients.

**In September, I used my local contacts to pull together a fabulous group of wedding suppliers to collaborate on a styled photo shoot.** This was done at no cost to the business, and all suppliers received copies of the images and a listing as one of our recommended suppliers. We have also been able to gain some publicity by getting the shoot featured in a magazine. The styled shoot gave us an opportunity to create specific dishes to be featured, and to get the shots that we wanted without impacting on someone's event. Images from the shoot feature in our new wedding brochure, launched January 2016, and in all marketing for weddings at Suffolk Food Hall. We will also be able to use a lot of the images for general events marketing going forward.

**When I first joined Suffolk Food Hall, there had been a recent increase in conferencing room hire prices along with creation of delegate packages for refreshments.** On joining the team, I noticed that the venue hire fees for weddings seemed quite low and not consistent with the offering. We increased the prices and have just launched a brand new wedding brochure with new menus and a new venue hire structure that is much more consistent with similar local venues, and better value for the experience we can offer. In turn this will lead to creation of a new brochure for special events. To run a large event, we have to close the restaurant during the evening, so the event revenue has to equal or ideally surpass that of a typical evening in the restaurant.

**In the past I've mostly worked with private marquees or wedding-specific venue, so working in a venue that has multiple uses is challenging.** I have to weigh up whether a particular evening booking is going to bring in enough revenue to justify closing the restaurant, and have learned to have a business-focused approach as well as producing the right proposal for the customer.

> "Suffolk Food Hall is a family-owned business and we have that approach to everything we do. We are all about local produce and this is so important when it comes to events"

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