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NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS

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## EDITOR'S LETTER

### Best Practice



It has been my delight over the years to talk to so many helpful owners of farm shops and delis, either over the phone or in person. In the course of these conversations, people have been more than generous in sharing the fruits of their hard-earned experience. From them I have learned so much about the ins and outs of running an independent food shop that had the qualities which can't be learned from others – the essential drive, the personality and the bags of resilience – I might well be trying to run one myself. What I have been able to do with the information gleaned from you, the owners, is to collate and sift it, and occasionally offer it back in the form of useful tips on the business. Various articles have gone back to basics and taken the advice of various successful shop owners on how to tackle different aspects of retail. I'm sure that while some of these will have been helpful reminders on best practice, others will have merely confirmed what you already know – it all depends on where you are in your trading journey right now. The knowledge you have gleaned may have been funneled through this magazine, but it all comes from your colleagues out in the field, so to speak. This issue, food writer Robin Goldsmith talks

“People have been more than generous in sharing the fruits of their hard-earned experience”

to people in the know in order to find out how to run a super deli, and gather their need-to-know tips and tricks. Also in the June issue, we have a round-up of the best summer cheeses, a look at British and Continental charcuterie and hams, and we talk about how to make the best of the home baking sector. Sweet and savoury biscuits, condiments and smoked foods are also on this month's menu. As always, we have all the essential fine food news, announcements of new openings and our regular look at the dairy industry with Cheese Uncut.

Ross Gilfillan

ross@aceville.com

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### REVAMP FOR FOOD & DRINK TRADE SHOW

The Food & Drink Trade Show, organised by Hale Events, has moved locations to the Three Counties Showground in Malvern.

Mike Anderson, managing director of Hale Events said, "We are excited about bringing this show to Malvern. Local buyers can expect to find a superb selection of quality regional food and drink from Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, alongside all the other services they need for their hospitality or retail business.

"We are also really pleased that the South West regional food group, Taste of the West, will be taking part along with a selection of the best producers from the South West."

### BREAD SALES DOWN

According to a recent report published by The Grocer, bread is losing its popularity in the UK.

Last year the publication announced that four in 10 British consumers were stepping away from conventional loaves in favour of breads such as pitta and wraps, and nearly 15 per cent are avoiding bread altogether and opting for healthier options.

This loss in popularity has led to the wrapped loaf industry losing nearly £140 million last year, but experts are advising that interest in artisanal bread is still on the rise.

We'd like to have your take on this news – please email your thoughts to holly.shackleton@aceville.co.uk

## Speciality Food Charity Ball

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# Brexit: Are You In Or Out?

It's unsurprising that the EU referendum is a hot topic at the moment, not least in the food industry, as we not only import food from elsewhere in Europe but also employ staff from across the EU community.

Here, we speak to three industry spokespeople for their thoughts on the changes that the in/out vote will bring to our lives both personally and professionally.

## MICHAEL MACK, FARMA



The issue of Brexit is a complicated one for farm retailers across the UK. FARMA members are not just food retailers;

they run farms, process their own meat and vegetables, run production kitchens and attend markets. All these elements of their businesses are affected by both EU and UK law, agricultural support programmes and consumer confidence.

Will we see a decline in legislation affecting our businesses? EU directives are created in the EU to protect EU citizens. Each EU member state then implements their own laws to ensure that they are compliant with the directive. Effectively, this creates legislation within the member state which is compliant with the EU requirement. So, whether we stay in or leave the EU, as businesses we will still have a similar set of regulations to

follow. Over time we may see some changes and adaptations to these regulations, but overall we should ask whether it is a realistic expectation that the government will be able to drastically reduce the number of laws they have in place to protect the voting public.

Will government support for farmers change after the vote? If we stay in the EU we know what will happen with CAP for the next four years. After this time, the whole question of CAP will be reopened and the same horse trading will happen between all 28 member states to get the best deal for them. Most commentators would predict that through these negotiations we will see the overall budget spent on CAP continue to decline. The leave campaign are saying that they would spend as much on farming support as is currently the case. With budget cuts across government departments and the projected cuts in tax returns, it will be increasingly hard for ministers,

whatever their political allegiance, to justify spending at current levels for farming businesses.

If we leave the EU, will our customers have more money in their pockets? The Treasury has predicted that if we leave the EU every family in the UK will be £4,300 worse off per year. Assuming this number is inflated and that we will show signs of resilience beyond the economic models, it would be a very optimistic person who would say that leaving the EU will have a positive impact on our customers' pockets.

For a lot of people, staying in the EU would be the most logical vote; however, this election will include a lot of votes based on the heart and not the head.

## ANTHONY DAVISON, BIGBARN



For food producers and the farming community, there are both positives and negatives to Brexit. If we were to stay in we will be assured that farming subsidies remain and we will continue to export freely to the EU without any duty. However, coming out of the EU offers some new opportunities.

The money currently used in the UK towards EU farming subsidies could, potentially, be used to specifically benefit UK farmers. Additionally, we could place duty on products from the EU that flood our market and make UK produce unprofitable, such as milk, butter, cheese and some veg. This will give British farmers a chance to compete.

Either way, I do feel that the whole debate will get people thinking more about where their food comes from and should, hopefully increase demand for British grown produce.

## ANTHONY ROWCLIFFE, ROWCLIFFE & SON



Personally and business-wise, I think it would be absolute madness for us to vote out. I'm old enough to remember being a cheese importer before we joined the common market as it was then, and the actual activity of importing goods from abroad was very much more complicated and much more laborious than it is today. Even now, we bring in a lot of Swiss cheese which is a huge amount more time consuming than it is to bring in cheeses from within the EU.

What people seem to naively think is that we're a small, independent nation which can stand on its own two feet, and that nothing is going to change. Some people think things will improve. To be frank, I can't see how that can become a reality; the price of food will increase even from the Continental suppliers who want to continue to supply the UK. The food industry these days is more or less a global affair, and the idea that you don't want to be part of a much larger club, which supports its members, is ludicrous.

The media has published articles quoting ridiculous changes the EU plans to make which will make our lives more difficult, but I would struggle to find any particular rule, regulation or law which would have as devastating an affect as they're suggesting it will. If it's not broke don't fix it. We've been in the EU for 40 years and it's made a lot of things run smoother; immigration is of course a problem, but we need to remember that there's a lot of work done by people from the European community and without them the work would possibly not get done – indeed, I can't imagine a world without these people. Not to mention the ability for British workers to get employment abroad; I find it odd that other people think that could continue.

I don't claim to understand all of the ramifications of being in or out, but overall being part of this community has to be a good thing.

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



### MEAT PRODUCER TO EXPAND FARM SHOP

An artisan meat producer based in Co Antrim is planning to expand its farm shop and add a café in order to further the sales of its prize-winning products. Broughgammon specialises in rose veal, speciality sausages and goat meat, which is sold through the farm shop and in meat boxes online.

The company, which is headed up by Charlie and Becky and Sandy Cole, has lodged a planning application with Causeway Coast and Glens Council to adapt an existing barn into a farm shop and café. If permission is granted, the the Coles hope to open for business in 2017. The present farm shop, which is attached to

Broughgammon's butchery is now proving too small for present needs. Becky Cole, joint manager said, "We have really seen growth from our online meat box sales and our artisan butchery is going from strength to strength. The new shop will be a conversion of our round-top barn, which is just the right size for a cosy café and farm shop, as well as a space for pop-up suppers and workshops."

"The café which will serve up a menu including our artisan meat products as well as other local ones. We feel like the conversion will really give back to the farm financially, as we can use it for a multitude of events and workshops and also as a daily café and hub for the community."

### HONITON WELCOMES DELI & EATERY

Linleys Deli & Eatery, located on the High Street in Honiton, East Devon, has expanded to include a cafe/restaurant on the first floor of its grade 2 listed period building.

The deli side of the business opened in December, offering artisanal produce from across the world from small, independent family business including fresh organic pasta from Tuscany, local charcuterie, olives from Greece and Spain and Scottish chocolates.

The business is run by husband and wife team Tom and Aisha

Montgomery-Swan, who decided to move into retail after three years running an award-winning street food truck.

The cafe/restaurant will offer rustic, seasonal food made using local and sustainable ingredients including fresh fish, bakes and food from local smokeries, as well as a salad bar for takeaway lunches.

Linleys Deli & Eatery also sells coffee roasted by a roaster located just down the road in Axminster.



### NEW SITE FOR CHEGWORTH VALLEY

The Chegworth Farm Shop has opened a new store on The Pantiles in Tunbridge Wells, its third retail site. The shop will sell fresh bread, dairy, local and speciality meats and whole foods as well as deli counter items, alongside Chegworth's juices, organic vegetables, salads and fruit grown in Kent.

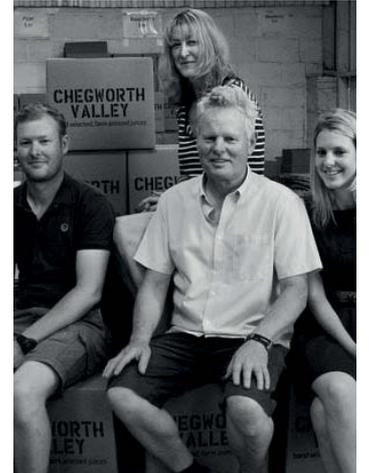
Hot drinks will be available to either enjoy in the shop or takeaway, and will be served alongside an offering of cakes and pastries.

Vikki Eames, marketing manager, said, "We currently have a shop at

Borough Market, which sells our farm produce and our juices and then we also have a full farm shop at Notting Hill Gate. Chegworth Farm Shop at the Pantiles in Tunbridge Wells will be our third shop.

"The Pantiles is a really lovely area. At the moment it has some really amazing restaurants and pubs, but it doesn't have anywhere that people can go and buy the sort of produce available in a farm shop.

"We saw a gap in the market here and opened the Chegworth Farm Shop, in time for the Pantiles Food Festival. We are interviewing at present and expect to employ at least five members of staff."



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## JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES



### “The Royal Connection”

I am writing this article on April 21st – H.M. the Queen's 90th Birthday – and very many happy returns are in order.

1926 was a very different place from 2016. Just two weeks after the Queen's birth the General Strike started, it was the year when Winnie the Pooh was first published, when John Logie Baird carried out the first public demonstration of the television, and the year when the pop up toaster was invented. It was also the year when Al Capone was at the height of his powers and David Attenborough, Fidel Castro and Marilyn Monroe were also born. Mussolini was the Prime Minister of Italy and Stalin the supreme leader in Russia.

Despite all that, popular food brands of the time may still be familiar to us today and included Kia-Ora, Bovril, Rowntrees, Peek Frean, Lyons cakes and Colman's mustard. Clarence Birdseye launched frozen foods in 1922 and tinned soups were well known with Heinz, Crosse & Blackwell and Campbell's all on sale. As a matter of fact, turtle or terrapin soup was a popular starter at state banquets. At this time Britain was increasingly importing its food, which was becoming cheaper and fresher. Packaged cakes were becoming more readily available, with one of the most popular types of the time being Battenburg. Other foods have however, unsurprisingly, disappeared from modern shopping lists such as sheep's head soup, jugged hare, rissoles

of game and fig pudding. Some of the brands I mentioned above held Royal Warrants for supplying the Royal Household in the 1920s and would have probably been staples in nearly every village shop in the country. Fast forwarding to this end of the Queen's lifetime and there are still many famous Royal Warrant Holding brands adorning the shelves of speciality food shops up and down the land.

What exactly is the Royal Warrant I hope I hear you ask? The Royal Warrant (which dates back to the eleventh century) is granted by the monarch to companies that supply goods or services to the Royal Warrant. Prince Philip and The Prince of Wales are also able to grant warrants. There are about 800 Warrant Holders in existence and of these I believe nearly 25% supply food or beverages. In order to obtain the Royal Warrant you need to supply the Royal Household continuously for five years and the sales level must be of a proportionate level, who we are proud to have on our shelves such as Walkers, Baxters, Prestat, Big Tom, Tabasco, Maldon Sea Salt, Carrs Table Water Biscuits, Wilkins, Colmans, Musks and Denhay to name a few of the best-sellers.

The combination of tradition and quality resonates well with our customers and one of our aims is to sell as many Royal Warrant-holding products as possible – it is a uniquely British thing and a good niche for speciality food shops to develop.

# British PDO Foods at Risk

**A campaign has been set up to protect British foods with PDO and PGI status from negative effects as a result of the ongoing agreements with the USA and Canada.**

While the details of the agreement with America (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) is still being kept secret, the agreement with Canada (CETA) is now publicly available and shows that Canadian businesses will be able to produce PDO and PGI-accredited British foods and supply them to the UK if Defra does not protect these items within the deal.

Martin Allan of Lewisham StopTTIP said, “Big business has lobbied intensely for a massive trade deal with the USA (Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership, TTIP) and Canada (CETA).

“While extolling the benefits to British small and medium-sized businesses, it is apparent that the winners will be big multi-nationals, including big agri business.

“The way the UK has failed to protect UK Protected Geographical Indicators (PGI) in negotiations in the CETA agreement (between European Union and Canada), highlights that when push comes to shove, our government prioritizes liberalization of the market above home-grown commerce and speciality foodstuffs.

“People have worked hard to achieve PGI and PDO (Protected Denomination of Origin) status, and their very livelihoods may now be at risk. What a loss to consumers, too!

“It is impossible to be clear on detail as the negotiations on TTIP remain secret – even our MEP/MP's are denied full access to details – but, as CETA negotiations are complete and the deal awaiting

ratification (so urgent action needed), the text has been available and studied by experts. It is in CETA that we see that while other EU countries have nominated their PGI and equivalent products to be excluded, eg Feta (Greece) and Prosciutto di Parma (Italy), none have been put forward by our government so none are protected. Canada could create and market its own versions of these products using their original names.

“When asked, Defra replied that it simply did not put any of the UK's PGIs forward. France nominated 42, UK zero!

“For more information and to take action, visit [stopTTIP.net](http://stopTTIP.net) and [businessagainstopTTIP.org](http://businessagainstopTTIP.org).”



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## Back British Food This Autumn

The farming industry is joining forces with the Government this autumn to celebrate the best of British food with a calendar of events.

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), NFU, Red Tractor and Love British Food are coming together to coordinate events during the Government-named 'Year of British Food' including British Food Fortnight, Red Tractor Week and Back British Farming Day, which marks the start of the campaign in September.

Elizabeth Truss, environment secretary said, "Our food industry has so much to be proud of – whether it is the seafood from our spectacular coastline or the world's most delicious beef, lamb, milk and cheese, our farmers bring us from the hills and pastures around the UK. That is why we launched the Year of Great British Food to champion the best of British food at home and abroad. I'm delighted to see our world-leading food and farming industry celebrating British food and drink to help grow our food industry further. With 3.8 million people employed in the food chain we know it is vital for our economic future we make British food and farming all it can be and I am determined to work closely with the farming industry to

harness innovation and technology, develop new skills and promote our rich food heritage."

Minette Batters, deputy president of NFU said, "I'm pleased to see our farming organisations collaborating and coming together to champion great British food and the thousands of farmers and growers who produce it every day of the year. I hope this plan of action will help showcase British food which, as we know, is the best in the world. It is also so important that British farming is recognised for the key role it plays, not only in producing great food but in its contribution to the country's economy, in creating jobs, as well as the beautiful and diverse rural landscape that attracts millions of tourists every year."

Alexia Robinson, founder of Love British Food said, "Love British Food is delighted that the whole farming industry is uniting to celebrate British food. We have been doing this on our own since 2002 when British Food Fortnight was founded in response to the foot and mouth crisis that brought farming to its knees. It is great that the whole industry is now working together on a coordinated calendar of events to celebrate British food this autumn."

## DIARY DATES

### June

#### 1st–4th

ROYAL BATH & WEST SHOW  
INC BRITISH CHEESE AWARDS  
Somerset  
[bathandwest.com](http://bathandwest.com)

#### 9th–10th

FREE FROM EXPO  
Amsterdam  
[freefromfoodexpo.com](http://freefromfoodexpo.com)

#### 16th–19th

BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW  
SUMMER  
NEC, Birmingham  
[bbcgoodfoodshowsummer.com](http://bbcgoodfoodshowsummer.com)

#### 17th–19th

TASTE OF LONDON  
Regents Park, London  
[london.tastefestivals.com](http://london.tastefestivals.com)

#### 19th–20th

HARROGATE FINE FOOD  
SHOW  
Yorkshire Event Centre, Harrogate  
[gff.co.uk](http://gff.co.uk)

#### 23rd–26th

ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW  
Edinburgh  
[royalhighlandshow.org](http://royalhighlandshow.org)

#### 26th–28th

SUMMER FANCY FOOD SHOW  
Javits Centre, New York  
[specialtyfood.com](http://specialtyfood.com)

### July

#### 8th

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[cotswold-fayre.co.uk](http://cotswold-fayre.co.uk)

#### 8th–10th

THE ALLERGY & FREE  
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[allergyshow.co.uk/london](http://allergyshow.co.uk/london)

## CHARLES CAMPION



## "Less is more... more or less"

No sooner had the audience figures nudged over a monster 13 million than the producers of the *Great British Bake Off* intensified their hunt for a spin off. Something without Mel, Sue and their particular brand of innuendo but hanging onto their coat tails. So, this spring saw *Bake off Crème de la Crème* amble onto our screens. Fifteen teams of professional pastry chefs not only had to compete but also to turn out large numbers of whimsical delicacies against the clock. The programme was compered by Tom Kerridge, an articulate fellow and a great cook. There's a lot wrong with the fundamental idea – for a start it's impossible to produce the best pastry work against the clock. Pâtisseries are all bonkers (some say that's due to a life time spent getting up in the middle of the night to bake bread) but even they cannot beat the clock. When time slips by and something ends up not quite right or unfinished, the perfectionists in the kitchen do it again, and again, until it is right. It was saddening to see professional pastry chefs mortified when they were unable to complete a tray of 30 miniature works of art. But the sticking point is the insane complexity of these creations – does anyone enjoy biting into a cake that features six or seven competing flavours? In one programme the pâtisseries' brief was "apple crumble and custard". Cue dry ice and miniature apples made from sorbet. But you have

to suspect that a well-made apple crumble with decent custard would be much better eating. We are all doomed when the looks of a dish becomes more important than how it tastes.

By way of balance, there was also the stunning Oxford Gastronomica Dinner in celebration of Claudia Roden's 80th birthday – an event that showcased the honest cooking of José Pizarro. The food was as simple and sophisticated as the *Bake Off* spin-off was overcomplicated and contrived. Rafts of 'pica pica' circulated during pre-dinner drinks – octopus, Manchego with membrillo, croquetas, Jamón Ibérica. Then to table for 70 guests, mainly chefs and food writers – butler service, five starters, one main. A glorious foodie "help-yourself". The presentation of the food was impeccable, each dish, and every combination of ingredients, had been thought about. These dishes are homely, there are no elaborate stacks, no towers, in fact no fancy presentation at all, but your instinct tells you that they will be good to eat. Pizarro knows and loves his ingredients and rejoices in bringing the best out of them. Meanwhile, somewhere in Britain in the small hours, the pâtisseries grind onwards striving for perfection. Good luck to them, but they will always come second to bold, straightforward flavours and dishes that comfort the inner diner. This isn't rocket science... it's more important than that!

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## GILES HENSCHEL OF OLIVES ET AL



### “Original plagiarism. Who said it first?”

Language really is a many-splendoured thing – full of marvel and magnificence. Recently, I've been marvelling at the magnificence of the regulations surrounding the use of certain words like “fresh”, “natural”, “traditional”, “authentic”, “real” and “genuine” not to mention, “homemade”, “farmhouse”, “hand-made” and a number of others. I've also been marvelling at the startling lack of words about protecting the intellectual property of recipes.

The Declaration of Independence is written in 1,458 words, Magna Carta is a bit longer at about 3,600 words, but try the Food Standards Agency publication, Criteria for the use of the terms Fresh, Pure, Natural etc. in Food Labelling, and it weighs in at an impressive 9,178 words over 32 pages. All explaining the finer points of whether it's permissible to use the word 'natural' (among the others listed above) lest the consumer be misled. According to Clause 51, “Natural” means essentially that the product is comprised of natural ingredients, e.g. ingredients produced by nature, not the work of man or interfered with by man...’ and so it goes on for another 1770 words and 7 clauses – all to explain what ‘natural’ means and why you'll be spanked by Nanny State if you use it wrongly.

For the full story, look no further than “A reference to Food Composition and Labelling Legislation – Food Standards Training Manual”, which provides

the inside track to Trading Standards Officers so they can determine the level of naughtiness food producers have stooped to in bringing us various concoctions and confections. It's a magnificently marvellous 81,314 words over 292 pages. Awesome.

And yet, in all this governmental wordage there's not one word of protection for the actual creators of product. True food manufacturers and innovators still have no legal protection over what they conjure up and strive to perfect. Sure it's possible to patent a recipe, but to do so necessitates full disclosure which, as soon as you change one milligramme of one ingredient or one minute of time in process, BINGO! a brand new recipe is born that negates all of that patent malarkey. Whoopee for lazy indolent copycats everywhere riding on the coat tails of those blessed with imagination, creativity and sheer bloody mindedness to carve a path for others to follow with me-too look-a-likes. Bit like a tribute band. Flattering imitation but no creativity.

As for blatant theft of recipes and techniques by those without original thought, there's not a great deal that can be done except relish in the fact that revenge is a dish best served cold and that's one recipe that needs no protection. All hail the genuine, original, authentic and real alchemists of food inspired by everything they see, taste, feel and touch to bring us the richness of inventiveness that keeps our souls fed and our stomachs happy.



## A New Way to Support Local Food

**Bodnant Welsh Food has found a novel way to support locally-produced food – to sell the eggs of chickens raised by a local school.**

Children at Ysgol San Sior in Llandudno raise rare breed chickens in

order to learn about food and animal welfare, and sell the eggs at Bodnant Welsh Food Centre during school holidays.

The 2,000th 'Wyu San Sior' (San Sior Egg) has been now been sold

through the retailer. Conrad Jones, operations director at Bodnant Welsh Food Centre said, “Here at the centre we're always keen to encourage local businesses and I think it's fantastic that we have been able to give our on-going support to such a novel enterprise as the eggs produced at Ysgol San Sior.

“Reaching 2,000 eggs from the school is quite a milestone for both them and us and definitely something to celebrate.

“More than half of the produce we sell is either sourced from the Bodnant site or comes from artisan producers, like Ysgol San Sior, based within a few miles of the centre, something that we are very proud about.”

Ian Keith Jones, head teacher at Ysgol San Sior said, “Our little business venture is no yoke and since we began producing the eggs almost three years ago things have gone from strength to strength.

“We now have a flock of 156 chickens at the school who between them laid around 17,000 eggs last year, compared to just over 15,000 in 2014.

“We're able to sell most of them to our parents but during the school holidays, of course, the hens still keep laying, so we have been supplying these eggs to Bodnant and have just sold them our 2,000th, which is quite a landmark.

“We thought a link with Bodnant was very important, as the centre has a very good reputation for supplying locally produced food and gives the children an insight into how a successful business operates.

“We're sticking with Bodnant because without their support during the holidays we couldn't continue producing so many eggs as we'd have nobody to sell them to.”

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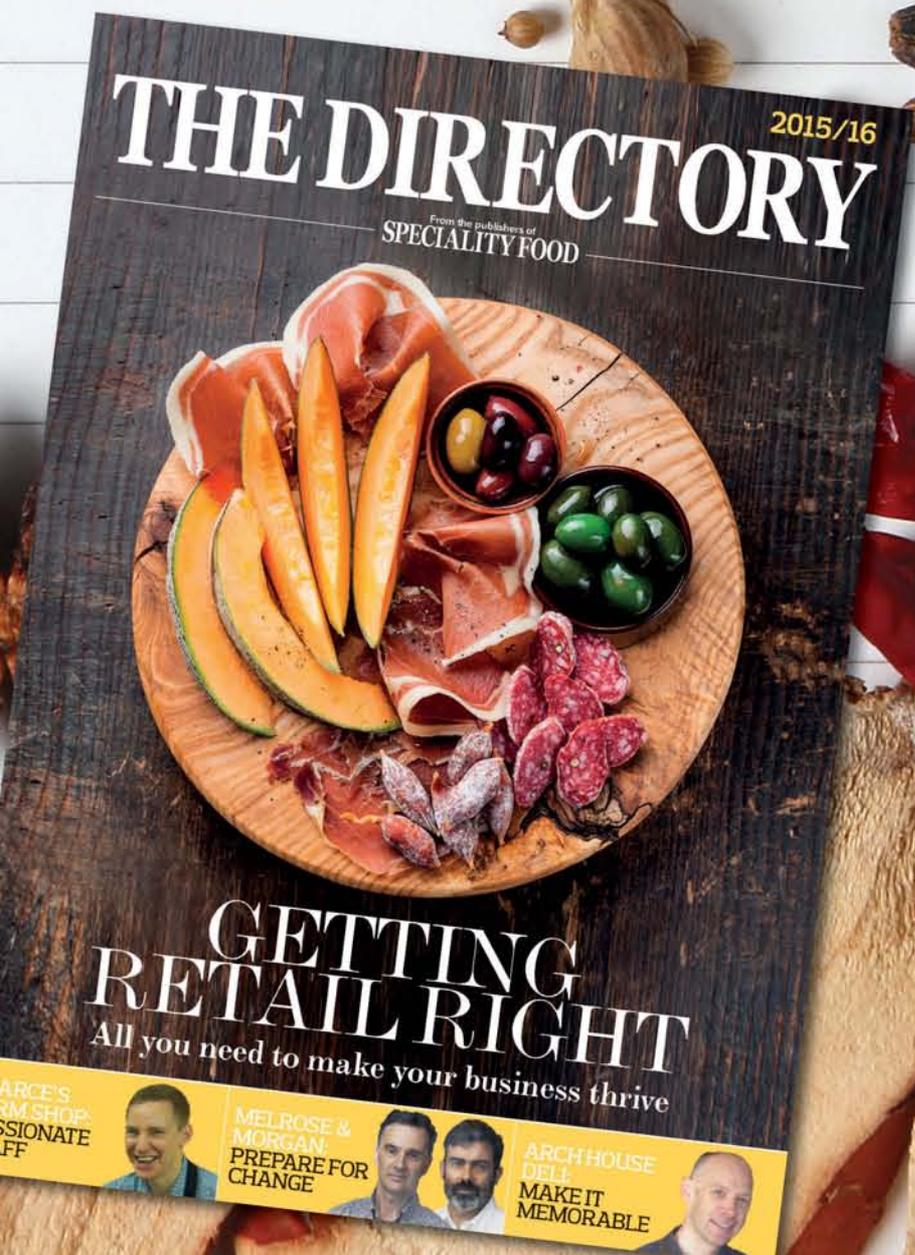
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YOTAM OTTOLENGHI AND KEN HOM WITH THE WINNERS OF THE BEST PRODUCER AWARD, ILLTUD LLYR DUNSFORD AND LIESEL TAYLOR FROM CHARCUTIER LTD

## BBC Food & Farming Award Winners Announced

The winners of the 16th BBC Food and Farming Awards have been announced at an event which brought together some of Britain's top chefs, food writers and broadcasters including Yotam Ottolenghi, Diana Henry, Mitch Tonks and Angela Hartnett together to celebrate the growing industry.

Winners include Halletts Real Cider (Best Drinks Producer), Illtud Llyr Dunsford (Best Food Producer) and Our Cow Molly (The Future Food Award).

Sheila Dillon, founder and host of the awards and presenter of BBC Radio 4's The Food Programme said, "As always we were looking

for great food—that's transforming society. And we found people and organisations doing that in their thousands. There's a new generation out there who find the good food business more appealing than technology or media or finance and they're making it their life's work. What a wonder!"

Ken Hom, chef said, "It's a real treat to be at the BBC Food & Farming Awards this year and meet such a fabulous group of finalists and taste their produce. The Awards offer a fantastic opportunity to open people's eyes to the array of incredible local food that's on offer to them right across the UK."

## Support for Scottish Indies

The new SNP (Scottish National Party) Government has been asked by the Scottish Grocers Federation (SGF) to create a policy agenda which supports small retailers in its next term in office.

The SGF has also requested that the government cancel plans for the deposit return scheme, work on reducing retail scheme and make the small business bonus scheme permanent.

Dr John Lee, head of public affairs at Scottish Grocers Federation said, "In our view the SNP's lack of an overall majority makes it less likely that

there will be another independence referendum in this parliament. This should allow the Scottish government to focus on supporting our industry and the 44,000 jobs it provides.

"We need the small business bonus scheme to become permanent. We need new legislation to give shop workers the protection they deserve. We need the proposals for deposit and return to be scrapped urgently. We will also lobby MSPs to support the setting up of a cross party group on convenience stores to give retailers a direct voice in the Scottish Parliament."

## Scottish Producers Make Shortlist

The finalists of the Scotland Food & Drink Excellence Awards have been revealed, ahead of the announcement of the winners in June.

19 categories are awarded in the scheme, including Young Talent, Environmental Sustainability, Scottish Sourcing and Scottish Food & Drink Entrepreneur, which aim to highlight the innovation, best practice and excellence demonstrated across the food and drink industry in Scotland.

165 products were tested during the judging process, ranging from charcuterie and chocolate to fruit juice and vinegars, and were scrutinised for their taste, quality and packaging.

The awards were organised in association with The Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland (RHASS).

Willie Gill, chairman of the RHASS said, "This shortlist reinforces what we already know, which is that Scotland's food and drink industry is blossoming with incredible businesses and producers. The RHASS is again proud to be supporting these awards and to also represent this country's primary food producers, whose hard work and passion is integral to the food supply chain relied on by all of the businesses in this shortlist."

James Withers, Scotland Food & Drink chief executive said,

"The Excellence Awards is a flagship event in the Scottish food and drink industry's calendar, recognising high calibre across the sector. It rewards the standout products, outstanding individuals and best practice across one of Scotland's most successful industries. It is these people, products and practices which make Scotland a Land of Food and Drink.

"This year's awards have received a record 245 entries across retail and foodservice product and business categories from 137 food and drink companies countrywide. The shortlist recognises a wide range of businesses from artisan producers to established brands. Our expert judges remarked on the high standard of entries with the tasting panel sampling 165 products over two days.

"Winners will be announced at the sold out awards ceremony and dinner in June, we look forward to a stellar celebration!"

## How to Take Advantage of Tourism

The latest data from the Office of National Statistics shows that visits to the UK are on the increase – but how can food and drink businesses capitalise on this? Anthony Davison at food and drink website bigbarn.co.uk offers his insight

"In the three months to January 2016, there were 7.6 million overseas residents' visits to the UK, up by 3 per cent compared with the corresponding period a year earlier. However, 3 per cent less was spent on these visits in total, which means that British businesses need to work harder to make that conversion.

"Loyal customers are obviously a key factor in the survival of rural food

and drink businesses, but tourism can also play a huge part, particularly at key times of the year such as Easter and summer. To ensure year-round success, businesses need to be visible to visitors. Sometimes achieving this can be as simple as dropping leaflets or business cards at your local Tourist Office, hotels or B&Bs – in fact, all these ideas should go without saying if you want to be seen.

"Creating these relationships isn't difficult. It's a case of taking the time to visit other businesses and discuss options that might work and benefit both parties. Small hotels and B&Bs are often crying out for additional services that will improve their guest

ratings, so if they can work with other local businesses to expand their services with no additional cost, this can prove hugely beneficial for everyone involved.

"Other ways to gain customers is to look at local tourism websites and get your business featured. Do your research and choose those with high visitor numbers and a good range of listings. Alternatively, get yourself on BigBarn where people can postcode search for local businesses near where they are staying. I know a lot of people who refer to BigBarn to discover interesting food shops or open farms they can enjoy when they are travelling around the UK."

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I grew up in Yorkshire in the Seventies, spending my time hanging around on farms. I got my first job on a farm when I was 14 and carried on working on them during my school holidays. This love of farms continued as I became older; I studied Geography & Geology at Exeter university, then worked on Mary Quicke's farm for around eight months, which made me decide to go into dairy farming. I then went to Cirencester to learn about the nuts and bolts of farming, before moving to Godminster in 1993. It was a conventional farm of 130 cows at that time, and the brilliantly-named farm manager – Cheyney Champion (Cheyney means 'man of the oak wood') – was a massive man with fingers the size of bread rolls. He'd worked at Godminster since he was 16, and was in charge of the horses. I was taking over quite an old-school farm; a lot of the buildings were quite knackered and dark with a lot of barbed wire. The first thing I did was do the farm buildings up and build a new dairy, then in 1996 I applied to go organic. Because it was a low-input farm, it only took until the summer 1999 to produce our first organic milk.

The very first day we produced the milk, we had it made into Cheddar as a celebration. A year later they were ready to eat so I gave them to the people who helped us start out. Everyone who tried it loved it and asked where they could buy some. I answered that they couldn't, so they told me to get on with it! We started to do farmer's markets with 1kg and 2kg cheeses, and the first day that we took £100 we were utterly thrilled with ourselves. We then started doing all of the Somerset farmer's markets, then a few in neighbouring counties. After that we moved onto consumer shows – all while the cheese office was above the milking parlour! As time has gone on, we've got bigger and created separate sales and production sites, and are now exporting, too.

I simply want to get more lovely cheese out to more lovely people. I really enjoy the cheese we produce, and still eat it every day! All of my friends and family have been hugely supportive, and we receive wonderful testimonials from people saying it's the best cheese they've ever tasted – that really drives us to keep going.

My dissertation at Cirencester was Environmentally Neutral Dairy Farms: Are They Possible?, for which I was inspired by my tutor Janet Rowe, who was an amazing lady and very renewable-minded. She really got me thinking, and that combined with my degree meant that I was particularly passionate about applying a scientific formula to a real life farm. I was taught at Cirencester that one way or another, you've got to go out and do something with your milk – hence making the cheese. Nothing's perfect, but my aim is to do something a bit more circular than conventional dairy farming. As a farmer



## THE INTERVIEW

Richard Hollingbery shares the passion, knowledge and inspiration behind Godminster's much-loved cheese

you look through the generations, and I see that in two generations' time the fertilisers that we're using, GM technology and global warming will be starting to hit the buffers in the same way antibiotics have done. All I'm trying to do is preserve the best bits of what we've

learned throughout the years; in my dissertation I concluded that you've got to cheat and cover a bit of all the options in the world we live in, for instance organic, permaculture and biodynamics as well as the use of satnav interactors. It's such a pleasure to work a farming system in the way

I've learned to – working in a circular way is very satisfying. We consolidated this argument by starting to make our own Brie, which we make using our own milk from our own farm.

I believe that own-labelled products at the multiples are a declining thing these days, which links back to the fact that there are so many new producers of food that people are becoming really interested in what they eat and who made it. The organic movement is improving quickly at the moment, and people are becoming increasingly interested in the provenance of the food they're eating which is a great thing. Seeing similar results to the cheese sector is the world of British sparkling wine – people are planting vines left, right and centre, and are winning awards internationally. It is one of the most exciting growth industries in Britain at the moment and, although I don't think it's going to be the biggest in the world, I'm incredibly excited to see where it will go from here.

### QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

#### INSPIRATION

Mary Quicke is my number one inspiration, but I think Helen Browning is a goddess. She has been absolutely at the forefront of turning organic food and farming into a strong, viable industry, and for that I tip my hat off to her.

#### MANTRAS

My mantra, which I have Chris Evans to thank for and which I repeat all the time at work, is 'a no is one step closer to a yes'. It's particularly useful in sales, but is also useful in any decision making process – it means that rather than 'no' being a dead end, it's an opportunity to come at the issue from another angle. It's a great way to approach life; to not get knocked down, and simply see things as bringing you a step closer to where you need to be. Another favourite of mine is 'Nature repays those who treat her kindly'. It was written on a stone I found in a restoration yard and we now use it across the business, including in some of our email signatures.

#### MAKING IT WORK...

Lots of discussions, lists and forward thinking is how I grew Godminster to what it is today. A lot of what ifs and what if nots. I have an approach which I call my 'hot air balloon approach' – basically, you imagine yourself looking down on what's going on around you to get perspective.

You've got to absolutely adore what you're doing – if you don't love it, change jobs. Everyone in the Godminster team seems to truly get what we're trying to achieve, even though it's quite difficult to put into words. They sometimes ask me what it's all about, and I answer, "This – precisely what we're doing!".

“ I aim to get more lovely people eating more lovely cheese by making classic science meet the modern age ”



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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

## Tracklements Releases Brushettini



Tracklements has released a new summer-friendly range of jarred condiments in line with the current trend for informal eating.

Available in three flavours: Sticky Pickle Brushettini, Roasted Pepper Brushettini and Mixed Mushroom Brushettini, the range offers an intense hit of flavour to cheese, olives, prosciutto and bruschetta.

Guy Tullberg, managing director of Tracklements said, "This range taps perfectly into the current UK trend for sharing plates and less formal eating. Ideal for relaxed and easy summer eating with friends, they allow retailers to capitalise on this growing market."

"At Tracklements, we're constantly making new products and trying out new ideas which we think will delight people and these three products struck a chord immediately. With their simple, honest and direct flavours we're confident they'll become best sellers."

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

## Americatessen Unveils Exclusive UK Launch

British importer and distributor of American food, Americatessen, has exclusively launched a new range of US-made sauces and marinades.

The range encompasses six signature sauces: Signature BBQ Sauce; Piquant Sauce; 'Texi-Cal' Fajita Marinade; Mojo Criollo Marinade; Chipotle, Lime & Tequila Marinade and Lemon Pepper Marinade, as well as a selection of four Zombie Cajun Hot Sauces.

Damian Curzon-Price, managing director of Americatessen said, "For many years several celebrities have endorsed or produced their own brands within the food industry. Generally these are very good, but here is one that sets itself apart from the rest."

"Billy Gibbons is a very colourful character himself, as well as being a perfectionist, musician, and keen cook. His own recipe sauces and marinades are his own inspiration and all made with totally natural ingredients offering a unique balance of flavours."

"We have been around long enough to recognise a good product when we find one!" [americatessen.co.uk](http://americatessen.co.uk)



## Chilli Jam Man Expands Range

Yorkshire Wolds-based The Chilli Jam Man has added a range of chipotle chilli jams to its selection of chilli-inspired products.

Made by hand, the sauces are available in three heat levels – mild, medium and hot – and are the latest addition to the brand's range of chilli jams, sauces, marinades, dips, bar snacks and chocolates.

Since the brand's launch in 2009, the products have been sold in independent retailers, department stores and cheese counters across the UK as accompaniments to burgers, sausages, cheese and pies as well as cakes and ice cream.

Simon Barrett, founder of The Chilli Jam Man said, "The way I create my Chipotle Chilli Jams makes them ideal to use as an ingredient. During cooking, they're reduced down by around 40% which cooks the sharp edge off the heat beautifully. Then I blend this with a few other ingredients to make my sticky, fruity BBQ glazes and sauces. The end result is a gorgeous depth of flavour which I can make in a range of heats from mild to wild!" [thechillijamman.com](http://thechillijamman.com)

**The Chilli Jam Man**

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It is no wonder that this same inspiration brought Billy back to his musical roots in the Mississippi Delta to have his unique southern sauces crafted right here in the birthplace of the blues.

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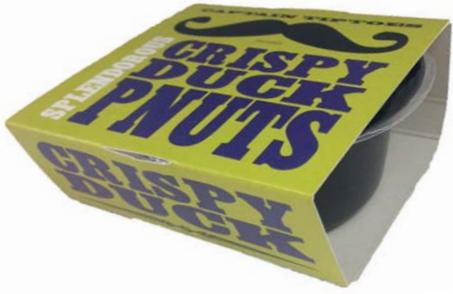
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## Captain Tiptoes Launches P Nuts

Captain Tiptoes has launched a new range of peanuts inspired by traditional crisp flavours.

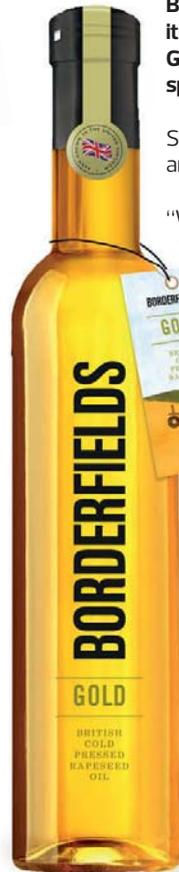
The P Nut range has been developed to tap into consumer demand for healthier snacking choices that still major on flavour.

Gluten-free and vegetarian, and in classic flavours including Cheese & Onion, Crispy Duck, Well Salted, Dry Roasted and Salt & Vinegar, each pack features a bold and colourful sleeve containing a peel top individual serve pot.

Simon Hurley, MD of Olives Et Al said, "Flavoured nuts have been a key driver of growth in the snacking sector and we're able to offer a peanuts in a whole range of flavours not previously seen in this format."

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

## Borderfields Extends Offering



Borderfields has added five new products to its range, including dressings and Borderfields Gold, a cold-pressed rapeseed oil made using specially selected seeds.

The dressings are available in four varieties: Simply Caesar, Coriander, Chilli & Lime, Balsamic and Honey & Mustard.

Paul Davenport, managing director said, "We're thrilled to be introducing five new products to the Borderfields portfolio. It's our latest move to continually innovate the cold pressed rapeseed oil (CPRO) category and follows on from our successful Infusions range launch. In responding to the growing consumer demand for these types of products it also helps retailers to make better-informed ranging decisions by offering products that cater specifically to their needs.

"That's exactly why we're launching Borderfields Gold, a blend made from our specially selected seeds and produced in small batch runs – so we can offer a product that is the ideal fit for food halls, farm shops and delis.

"At the same time, our new Dressings range demonstrates just how versatile Borderfields cold pressed rapeseed oil can be. We expect it to be a hit with retailers and shoppers, not only in the summer but throughout the year."

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

## New BBQ Range for Ross & Ross

Ross & Ross, the Cotswolds-based fine food brand, has branched out into BBQ accompaniments with a new 16-strong range.

The range consists of dry rubs, available in BBQ, Cajun, Jerk, Sweet Ribs, Moroccan, Chilli, Steak and Tandoori variants; Habanero & Pineapple, Smoky Chipotle and Sweet Chilli & Lime BBQ jams made in collaboration with Warwickshire Chilli Tree; smoked, garlic & charcoal and spicy BBQ salts created with Halen Môn; and BBQ oils in Original and Spicy, produced in partnership with Cotswold Gold. The brand has also released its first beer, a dark golden ale named The Cotswold Pig, which has been created through a collaboration with Stratford Upon Avon Brewery.

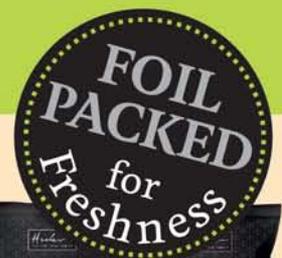
Ross Bearman, co-founder/ Director of Ross & Ross Food said, "Even at Christmas we were getting orders for BBQ products, it just proves how much people love BBQ flavours. We've been working with some really cool, top quality producers and our new range lets you season, marinate and compliment your BBQ food. We've got something for everyone and now it's May, there's no excuse not to get the BBQ fired up."

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



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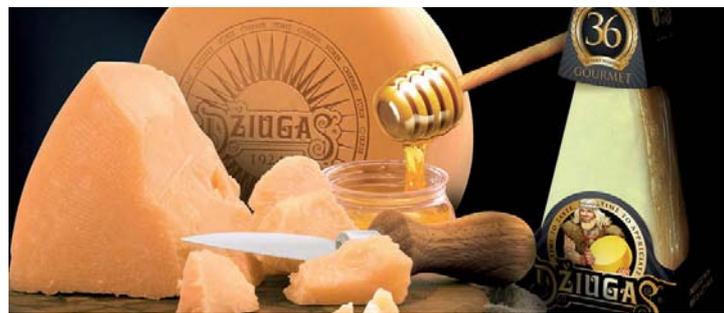
News, opinion and comment from dairy insiders

## Džiugas Boosts Continental Sales

Sales of Continental cheese increased by 10 per cent in volume and 4 per cent in sales value during the 52 weeks ending 31st January 2016 (Kanter Worldpanel), demonstrating that the trend for Continental cheese is at an all time high.

Retailers looking to profit on this trend, as well as the increasing popularity of mature cheese, could consider stocking Lithuania's Džiugas.

Available in four ages: Džiugas Delicate (24 months, mature with a crunch); Džiugas Gourmet (36 months, spicy); Džiugas Piquant (18 months, gently mature) and Džiugas Mild (12 months, distinctly subtle), Džiugas cheese is suitable for consumers who enjoy Parmigiano Reggiano and Old Dutch Edam as well as an artisanal, historical story.



## South Caernarfon Creameries Boosts Production

South Caernarfon Creameries, the Chwilog-based farmer co-operative, has opened a new cheese production unit in order to increase capacity from 9,500 tonnes to 12,000 tonnes of cheese per year.

A second investment phase which will further increase production to 17,000 tonnes is expected to open in the next few years.

Alan Wyn Jones, managing director at South Caernarfon Creameries

said, "Although it's currently a very challenging period for both milk producers and processors, it is vital that we continue to invest for the future.

"Our new cheese factory provides us with best-in-class production facilities that will further support our growth strategy with both existing and new customers.

"Our objective now is to get the new factory to its full processing capacity as quickly as possible and that will be achieved in partnership with our key customers and our product innovation programme. We have also during last year recruited a number of new Welsh member farmers in preparation for the new production unit."

John Gwynant Hughes, farmer member of South Caernarfon Creameries said, "We are proud supplying members and owners of SCC and are pleased that the business is forward-thinking and investing in our future which gives us as dairy farmers confidence in what is a very challenging period."

## Holy Cow Rebrands

Devonshire-based cheese maker Holy Cow has rebranded its range to create a stronger impact on independent retailers' shelves.

Now sporting bold black and white branding and promoting the business's organic credentials, the new look has been designed to stand out amongst other soft cheeses.

The items are available nationwide through Anthony Rowcliffe & Son.

Thomas Bourne, business development director at Carswell Group said, "Holy Cow presents a unique opportunity for independent retailers to stock single-estate British organic dairy that is not widely available in the supermarkets.

"The range includes the market-leading branded organic cottage cheese as well as the only commercially-available 100% British organic soft cheese on the market."

## Dairy Prices Continue to Drop

Further milk price cuts are set to be made in the next two months, despite the dairy sector experiencing the lowest average milk prices yet for seven years.

Milk buyers including Muller, Dairy Crest, Arla and First Milk have announced further cuts to milk prices, which for some farmers now stands below 16ppl.

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) is calling on all businesses within the industry to seek solutions to the situation which is becoming difficult for even the most efficient dairy farmers to survive.

Michael Oakes, dairy board chairman at NFU said, "There's no question that this is the most difficult time many dairy farmers have ever faced with milk prices far below break-even levels.

"What we have seen is that UK

dairy farmers are reacting to the market reality – with daily milk volumes now falling below production this time last year.

"Processors must clearly explain to farmers what they are doing to try to add value at this difficult time and farmers need to be honest with supplier on their production plans for the months ahead.

"We thank those retailers that have stuck by their initiatives on milk and cheese throughout this market downturn. Retailer initiatives can bring sustainability for dairy farmers. We would like to see all stakeholders within the supply chain take steps towards introducing sustainable principles into their own supply chains. This would give greater collaboration allowing for supply chain efficiencies and ensuring the UK dairy sector remains competitive."



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PETER'S YARD

## HOW TO: SELL MORE CHEESE

### Rhuaridh Buchanan, founder of Buchanan's Cheese, shares his tips on boosting sales

**C**onsider the space and conditions you have available when deciding which and how many cheeses to stock. Don't feel like you have to have a massive range; less is more. I think it is better to carry larger pieces of fewer cheeses which you change regularly, allowing you to build some height into the display and keeping the cheese in better condition by turning the stock over more frequently.

Make sure you still have a variety of flavours and styles: mild through strong, soft through hard and a selection of milk types. Start with some classics and supplement this with a few more unusual lines. For example, add something new that you are really liking at the moment or perhaps something seasonal, and definitely include some local products.

In my experience, 80% of your sales are going to come from 20% of your range. These are likely to be the classics I mentioned – cheeses that people know and are comfortable with will no doubt be your best sellers. The other 80% of your range is what you can use to create an interesting offering and will keep people coming back. It also allows you a great opportunity to interact with your customers by suggesting products you think they will like, or encouraging them to explore



different styles of cheese they haven't tried before.

Once you receive your delivery, it is crucial to look after your cheese. Remember it is a living, breathing thing. Have a good look at each cheese and you will no doubt notice differences even within the same batch.

Individual goats' cheeses can sometimes be a bit wet when they arrive. If so, store them open in their wooden boxes to dry a little before wrapping the boxes in waxed paper to encourage the centre of the cheese to break down.

Soft, bloomy cheeses such as Brie like a more humid environment and benefit from being kept in their wooden boxes. A good visual indicator of their ripeness is the colour of the rind. Ideally you want a little bit of a caramel colour to the peaks but still white in the troughs. When selling, give it a gentle squeeze to see how soft it is in order to choose the best piece for your customer's requirements and taste. Your washed-rind cheeses also like good humidity and we tend to add a layer of cling film on arrival to keep in more moisture. We display all of the above on the counter wrapped in clear cellophane rather than cling film as it stops them from drying but has enough of a gap so as not to damage the rind.

Hard cheeses, due to their density, can be prone to a taking on a tainted flavour from being kept in the fridge. To avoid this, make sure you get a tight, clean seal with cling film on the cut face of the cheese. You should

gently scrape the face of the cheese with the flat blade of a knife each day and replace the film to keep it tasting fresh and looking great.

I recommend displaying your cheeses by style, making it easier for the customer to see what's on offer. Don't be afraid to move these groups around the fridge from time to time encouraging regular customers to look further than their favourites. I have found this to be successful with all displays.

I always think it's welcoming to give the customer something familiar to taste just after you have smiled and said hello but before you have discussed what the customer is looking for. The public are much more knowledgeable about cheese, about food in general in fact, than they were, say, 10 years ago, but it is the perfect welcome and also allows you to show them how delicious and well-kept your cheese is. Tasting the cheese with your customer also helps in discussing the flavours with them and building a rapport. These small actions can help to remove any intimidation and get the taste buds ready to shop.

Once you have more of an idea of what your customer is looking for, you can start to help them build their selection. A selection of three or four cheeses makes a balanced choice for a dinner party: a hard, a soft and a blue with something different for the fourth, perhaps another type of milk.

I think you and your team should have an underlying objective of offering customers samples from your full range over the course of each day and if something is regularly left in the corner, then question whether you should continue to stock it. This approach is also a good training tool with less experienced staff who stick to selling the cheeses they know, encouraging them to use the full range.

Most of my advice about looking after and selling your cheese boils down to constant tasting; taste it when it arrives, when it's ready for the counter, with your staff and with your customers and you should feel confident in selecting and selling a delicious range of cheese.



## JUSTIN TUNSTALL RETAIL CONSULTANT



### "Captain Chutney triumphs once more"

**I** learned something today – the real difference between cross-selling and up-selling, Business jargon is ever-developing; new terms can mean new slants for consultants, even if the principles have been in operation for centuries. New words such as 'up-sell', 'basket value' and suchlike can feel inelegant at first, yet they meld quickly into popular parlance. Take BOGOF, which used to require patient explanation, even in the trade media, yet is now happily spoken of on TV and radio without further clarification.

In the cheese world, there's a significant role for both up-selling and cross-selling. Many a time new customers come in, asking for 'plain cheese'. This usually means they are looking for Cheddar. Merely fulfilling their order with the block 'family' Cheddar means missing an opportunity – not just to sell them something more costly, but also to delight their tastebuds and set them then on the road to getting much greater enjoyment from their cheese. Anyone venturing into a cheese shop asking for a generic such as 'plain', 'blue' or 'goat' is ripe for the up-sell to a premium variety which they'll really enjoy, both in the eating and in the knowledge they acquire about it. Often they'll be reluctant to go back to the supermarket block that used to be their staple diet. Most specialist shops practise this technique without being conscious of it – it's our way of life.

A cross-sell is something that merits forethought, however. It doesn't have to be complex –

perhaps just the suggestion of great biscuits and a preserve to accompany the cheeses that they've spent time selecting. It's less time-consuming to add another six or seven quid to a shopper's basket with these accompaniments than it was to sell them an additional variety of cheese. We used to have a guy work in my shop, whom we dubbed 'Captain Chutney'. He was the superhero of the cross-sell, personalising each suggestion in a confiding way. He'd share his experience with customers: 'I really enjoyed that Vinny with Pear Chutney last night', 'Hmmm... (looking at their purchases as he rang them up at the till) a soft goat! I love that with charcoal biscuits – have you tried the ones with cumin?'. Looking at my weekly sales figures, I could always tell which days he'd been working the till, as sales of preserves and biscuits went through the roof.

Remembering to top up each basket with the cross-sell is imperative if we want to get the benefit of our carefully chosen stock, the shelf space we've devoted to it and the staff we've trained. Hopefully it's second nature to ensure that all team members get a taste of a new cheese that we've just taken in. But do we take time to open packs of biscuits and a jar or two of preserve and see what works well with the new cheese? Enabling our staff to say, with sincerity, that they have really enjoyed a pairing of flavours carries a lot more conviction than a bland statement such as that sheep's cheeses go well with quince.

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# Cheese Talk

New retail perspectives from industry experts

GILES BARBER  
OF BARBER'S



## “Cheesemagic – it’s in our culture”

**W**e all know that cheese is magic... really. Some milk, some rennet, some starter culture, some salt and maybe sometimes some controlled mould, and hey presto you have thousands of different cheeses. Not only that, but each of those cheeses is just slightly different each time you make it, then once they are made they still continue to change just a little bit each day. Infinite variety from just four or five different ingredients. When it comes to food, what could be more magic than that?

Homage must first be paid to the milk and the cows and farmers that produce it. It goes without saying that without it there is no magic and no infinite variety. Milk varies from farm to farm, region to region and country to country. Clifton Fadiman said that “cheese is milk’s leap towards immortality” and in that leap it maintains the DNA of the milk from which it came. It’s particularly important in unpasteurised cheeses as the naturally occurring bacteria in the milk all help to begin the process

by metabolising the milk sugars (lactose) and souring the milk, thus starting the cheesemaking process.

When cheese is made from pasteurised milk it is the starter culture that plays the single most important role in developing the flavour and character of the finished cheese. The pasteurisation process kills off the naturally occurring bacteria (good and bad) in the milk, and it is the introduction of starter culture (friendly bacteria) which have to perform the function of starting the cheesemaking process by souring the milk, and going on to produce the cheese flavour through enzymatic breakdown of the milk proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Of course, cheesemaking methodology is critical to the sublime variety of different cheeses, but it is the type and mixture of strains of these friendly bacteria used in the process that ultimately make the biggest difference to the flavour of the cheese.

It is therefore vital, if we are to avoid a world of bland uniformity

in cheese, that we maintain a richly diverse range of starter cultures available to cheesemakers that continue to reflect the region from which each cheese is from. By their nature, starter cultures were originally a very local phenomenon, unique to each cheesemaking region, often taking the form of whey from the previous day’s cheesemaking. This whey would have been used to enhance the effect of the bacteria present in that day’s fresh milk straight from the farm. Often these “whey cultures” would become corrupted over time and a cheesemaker would have gone to a neighbouring farm to borrow some of their whey to start the next day’s cheesemaking. A virtuous circle of co-operation that gave local cheeses with a shared name their common identity. This tradition of whey cultures is being revived today with new UK makers experimenting by using whey in place of modern freeze-dried cultures and bringing back some much welcomed and applauded “cultural diversity.” One such maker is Hill Farm Dairy, in Somerset, who took their first steps into using whey starters back in 2014 and seem to be growing in confidence in their use providing them with something unique – their own bit of magic.

Barber’s are the guardians of the last of the cheese starter culture collections based on this noble tradition left in the UK. These cultures were originally based on the whey cultures that were shared between cheesemakers in the Cheddar region of the South West (there were once 12 cheese-

makers in the Barber’s home Parish of Ditchat, Somerset alone). The collection, based on the naturally occurring bacteria in the local milk, was refined into a formal collection of cultures in the second half of the last century by dairy industry leader Unigate. However, by the 1990s, production of starter cultures became much more commercial and the collection had to be saved from extinction when the advent of easier to use freeze-dried cultures rendered them commercially less viable. The tremendous diversity and delicacy of bacterial flora and fauna in these traditional cultures simply couldn’t survive the freeze drying process and their key contribution to maintaining the unique character of Cheddar from its original region could have been lost to future generations.

Happily, these mother cultures are alive and well (at Barber’s Maryland Farm and also a duplicate set stored for safety at another undisclosed location as a back-up) and are being used not only for the making of Barber’s own Farmhouse Cheddar but also by over a dozen other artisan cheesemakers. The tradition of local cheese makers working together to preserve the sanctity of a clearly defined and importantly historic British regional cheese is still alive and well in a world that threatens the original identity of many of our sacred foods.

So when you are next tucking into your favourite cheese, just stop to ask the question about where it’s from and how, in more ways than one, it is a reflection of its region – and remember the little bit of magic that makes it such a special food.

GEORGE  
PAUL OF  
BRADBURY'S



## “It’s all a matter of taste”

**T**hroughout the UK there is a kaleidoscope of tastes, many of these moving inexorably over recent years.

Many regions have had their long established favourites, and whilst some retain that recognition, many are in sad and terminal decline. The reasons behind this are many and varied, but food by its nature is evolving always and cheese is not exempt from the tide of change. The main British cheese inevitably begins with Cheddar, and here the classic robust farmhouse taste has declined in popularity and a host of famous Cheddar makers have gone to oblivion.

Cheddar after WW2 had close to a monopoly on cheese sales in the UK, and it has declined decade on decade in a total cheese market that has grown. The replacement here has come with more modern tastes and flavours.

Sweeter tastes, crunchy, vintage and stronger flavours, many in truth as manufactured as any artificial processed type, driven by the brands this change has filtered through the trade. A very few have remained in demand for Farmhouse, like Quicke’s, Keens and of course Montgomery’s. It’s heartland in now the West Country with hotspots around the rest of the UK. Unfortunately, is frequently seen as an older person’s preference.

Possibly the saddest losses have been around the Territorials, where, arguably, Cheshire was the preeminent territorial and nudging 20,000 tonnes per year and is now a pale, almost invisible shadow of its former self, with little impactful distribution outside its spiritual home.

Red Leicester and Double Gloucester too have slipped into the shadows, although some valiant

efforts on the former by the likes of Sparkenhoe unpasteurised, and in a totally different taste and style Red Fox, have in different ways reignited interest. At least this seems to have a franchise from the north to south of the UK.

Single Gloucester has emerged as the flag carrier for the county, with Charles Martell and Daylesford still making authentic versions of what may soon be another PDO. Although this latter cheese type is largely confined to artisan sellers.

Lancashire has a clutch of vigorous flag carriers still tussling for a market that is almost contained in this one county, with Sandhams, Butlers, Singletons, Carron Lodge, Dewlay, Proctors and others fighting for a small sector, and all having to manage this internally with other cheese types to stay viable. The county’s dominance is supported by most retailers like Booths, Morrisons and Waitrose who list the local ranges, and Lancashire is blessed with some vibrant local markets which keep it to the fore.

Wensleydale may well claim to be the one high spot against this backdrop of decline with Yorkshire Wensleydale now having achieved its own PDO, and combined with its creation of the top additive in Wensleydale with Cranberries it certainly has put itself on the map and has given it international exposure.

The cheese of Derby now seems defunct and Warwickshire is almost now Fowlers only.

That void of taste change has been steadily filled by a cocktail of differing cheese styles and types. Our Continental cousins have taken a growing share of that market, with tastes like Comté, Manchego, Parmigiano Reggiano, Emmental, Vintage Gouda, Ossau Iraty emerging in the hard and medium types, whilst Brie de Meaux, Camembert, Buffalo Mozzarella and soft goats cheese are storming ahead year on year.

Blue cheese has risen too, and the older favourite of Blue Stilton now has many worthy contenders and some really sparky new kids on the block. Styles here have moved very Continental with the softer Gorgonzola types now becoming fashionable. Cornish Blue is a worthy inheritor of the future, whilst the squidgy Beauvale from Cropwell is an interesting option, and if more proof were needed of the trends in cheese, Barkham Blue has been named British Cheese of the Year. A whole plethora of local blue types have emerged with Kentish Blue, Harrogate Blue, Cheshire Blue, Exmoor Blue, Strathdon Blue and so many more local types showing there is real interest here.

Soft cheese has blossomed over the past two decades and the UK now has a number of established Brie

makers, albeit the top two are not British-owned any more and a few others are nibbling around the edge in making a notoriously difficult cheese type – avoiding that metallic edge that is so commonplace in lesser quality makes. The expansion of cheese from goats and ewes milk is one of the most significant taste changes spreading quietly across the trade. Like its cousins in blue cheese and soft cheese, this sector of growth is no longer confined to the regional and local boundaries of former British cheese that defined places and local tastes.

In goat’s milk cheese there is both demands for British hard types like Ribblesdale and Elsdon as well as softer goat’s cheese like Golden Cross Woolserly or Kidderton Ash. However, imported French and Belgian types still have the upper hand, so here lies an opportunity.

With the presently thriving artisanal group of makers the choice will be substantial, and those unique opportunities in blue cheese, goats cheese, and ewe’s milk cheese will speed that road to change more easily than is usual.

So if the trend is to blue, or to soft goats cheese or rind-washed types, the demand may be national but the supply may well be local; there is uniformity and difference all at one time.

# MEET THE PRODUCER

A long-established Italian cheesemaker is all set to bring its Nonno Nanni range of fresh cheeses to the UK

Even those with the slimmest personal experience of Italian culture, will know that two factors feature heavily in the nation's psyche – food and family. In many instances these two defining characteristics are inextricably linked. Blood lines and authentic produce are Italian traditions exemplified by the premium, fresh cheesemaker, Nonno Nanni. Even the brand name references familial relationships (Nonno means grandfather). For three generations, the Lazzarin family has used carefully-sourced cows' milk from local farmers to create exceptional soft cheeses, including the Italian favourites Stracchino, Robiola, Caprino and Squaquerello.

## Tradition and innovation

The family-run business' success at home can be attributed to its ongoing commitment to maintaining meticulous standards and operating in an environmentally-sustainable and socially responsible manner. Based in the region famed for Prosecco, to the North West of Venice, Nonno Nanni has been producing cheese for 69 years. Today, the business employs 200 local people, including eight of founder Giovanni Lazzarin's grandchildren. The state-of-the-art dairy processes in excess of 60,000 tonnes of fresh milk each year – a very long way from the two wood-burning boilers with which 'Nanni' started the business.

Brands of Nonno Nanni's stature are built on genuine consumer trust. Gianni Lazzarin, the founder's grandson explains: "We're privileged to have an incredibly loyal following at home. We have over a 20% share of the Italian Stracchino cheese market by value. Over time, our presence has grown in a number of neighbouring European countries. As exports have continued to develop, we have decided that the time is right to bring the Nonno Nanni range to the UK. We are keen to demonstrate how wonderfully versatile and great tasting fresh cheese can be. In Italy,



generations of children have been brought up on Nonno Nanni – it is part of our rich and diverse heritage, so we're looking forward to introducing some classic recipes that we hope will find a home in Britain as well."

## Looking to the future

Another defining feature of the business is the overriding

commitment to investing for future generations. "It is essential to future-proof your business," Gianni says. "There are technical advances in the world of food production taking place all the time. This doesn't mean you have to turn your back on tradition. Rather, by embracing these developments you honour your forebears and

protect the legacy that they have successfully built. You simply can't stand still. All businesses must adapt in order to survive and grow. Nanni's small business has grown into an advanced dairy industry equipped with the latest and most sophisticated production systems. This is balanced with an adherence to time-honoured personal touches.

High tech industry and artisan skill are married together. In fact, many of our employees have inherited their roles, with positions being passed down from father to son and mother to daughter. We very much embrace family values.

"Nonno Nanni has always set high standards and prides itself on being forward looking. Our green credentials are based on offsetting our CO2 emissions, using clean electricity from renewable sources and a range of environmental initiatives. The implementation of modern production technologies helps the business to respect and harness the natural processing and nutritional properties of milk. Milk is selected even before arriving at the dairy.

## New audiences

"Nonno Nanni chooses the best raw materials, which are precisely analysed throughout production to guarantee the quality of the finished products. Under specific, controlled conditions, Nonno Nanni's living lactic ferments achieve extremely high concentrations, in excess of 2 billion per gram. The starter culture is only one of the reasons why Nonno Nanni's Stracchino tastes so good."

Having successfully introduced Nonno Nanni into Germany, retailers in the UK interested in enriching their Italian offering can benefit from truly authentic, fresh Italian cheese produced by a well-established brand with a proven record of success in its home territory.

2016 promises to be an exciting time, with an ongoing commitment to reaching new audiences. UK retailers will be able to sample the Nonno Nanni range at this year's Speciality & Fine Food Fair at Olympia, London 4th-6th September, Lunch! taking place at the Business Design Centre in London 21st-22nd September, as well as showcasing products at SIAL in Paris from 16th-20th of October, before returning to the UK for Welcome Italia.

**Nonno Nanni**



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# SELLING SUMMER CHEESES

Summer cheeses are essential cheesecounter inclusions at this time of year. We ask what's whetting appetites now?

Summer is almost here and it's time to refresh the cheese counter with a select choice of lighter cheeses, which customers can add to salads, enjoy with a little artisan bread or a glass of wine. Summer cheese is a forgiving category, including all sorts of soft and semi-soft cheeses, along with goat's and ewe's milk cheeses, and anything fresh and bloomy. As well as providing your cheesecounter with a seasonal change, fresh cheeses will sometimes afford the cheesemonger a chance to try something from a new name in cheese. New cheesemakers will often look for a quick return on their investment and without the luxury of being able to wait a year or more for a Cheddar to properly mature, may opt to start off with a fresh cheese, which can be an attractive stocking item – customers have been lured into a farm shop's entrance simply by the signed promise of a new, fresh goat's cheese. Goat's and ewe's milk cheeses are summer specialities and it's important that you use such signage and prominent display to bring them to the notice of browsing customers.



"A good selection of summer cheeses would include the following," offers Ros Windsor, managing director of Paxton & Whitfield, "Goat's cheeses – these are normally lighter styles of cheese and are perfect enjoyed on their own with some simple accompaniments, or in summer salads.

Territorials – such as Cheshire, Lancashire and Single or Double Gloucester. Delicious and subtle flavoured cheeses that have been made from milk produced by cattle that have grazed on richer spring/

early summer pasture giving the milk used to make the cheese a fuller and more floral flavour. They are great picnic or al fresco cheeses as they are firm and keep their shape in warm weather. They are also good cheeses used in summer recipes, e.g. quiches and salads. Also, don't forget a couple of classics, like a good artisan Cheddar. Cheddars are great for using in picnics, summer recipes and also as part of the classic ploughman's lunch. And even if they are not the most practical for outside eating, customers always love a gooey soft cheese such as an English or French style Brie."

## Age profiles

As for the longevity of summer cheeses, Ros says, "this depends on the style of the cheese. Younger, fresher cheeses could be a matter of 7-10 days, whereas harder cheeses will last much longer." Some cheeses, Ros says, will mature further and can then be sold at a later age. "These tend to be goat's cheeses that can be sold very fresh or can be matured on-site so they are firmer and have a deeper flavour. A good example is Crottin, a small French goat's cheese, that we bring into our shops when they are young. We sell them young but we also bring them on to create a firmer and slightly deeper flavoured cheese. We like to have a range of age profiles on sale because different customers like different age profiles. Depending on the age, they might be delicious in a light salad, or as they get older, grilled, or towards the end of their life, shaved on pasta."

Ros offers the following tips for storing summer cheeses: "For hard cheeses you need to store them at between 10°C and 12°C. It is best to keep them stored on wooden shelves and with straw matting under



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them to help the air circulation. Also a humidity level of 80% is best. For fresher softer cheeses you should keep them at below 5°C. We store our soft cheeses on wire racks on either waxed paper or straw matting. We keep the humidity level at 70% to 80% and ensure that there is good air circulation. All cheese must be turned regularly."

 Rhuaridh Buchanan, owner of Buchanan's Cheesemonger, says that what makes a cheese a summer one is that it is made with summer milk, which offers a particular taste.

"There are some classic or traditional cheeses which people expect you to have all year round," he says, "but as summer comes, and people's menus get lighter, we start to see some of the fresher cheeses. Two months ago we were only selling a handful of Burrata or Mozzarella, and we had about 300 leave here today. Ricottas sell well. They can be a draw, too. People are more read-up on food than they were five or 10 years ago and are probably inspired by the things they see in the media. I think this sort of thing sticks with them so that when they are planning a weekend summer picnic, they come in here and buy appropriately. We are probably less likely to sell a big wedge of Beaufort today but we will sell lighter, fresher cheeses such as goat's milk ones."

Sheer quality can change minds about goat's milk cheeses, Rhuaridh maintains. "People have strong opinions about goat's cheese. It is still probably the one cheese I get the most feedback about. Some people truly don't like goat's cheese but others are not aware of the diversity of this type of cheese. They don't realise

that they could have a hard goat's cheese, a goats milk Cheddar, or a blue goats cheese and when they think of this type, they may be thinking of something like a generic, overly-goaty chevre log. When cheese is made in an industrial way, and the milk gets shaken up, you can get an overwhelming goatiness. It's like the billy goat had run all over it. This comes from the milk not being treated gently. When the milk gets bashed about, then that flavour overrides the subtleties of the milk and you lose a lot of its unique characteristics. If you offer people a very well-made goat's cheese, they can realise that they weren't so adverse to goat's cheese after all."

**Small producers**

British variants on Continentals do really well," Rhuaridh says. "I think there are two reasons for that. One is that I quite like buying British cheese, but also I think sometimes the versions of Continental cheeses that get to general market in this country aren't always necessarily the best and freshest ones. This means that when they are made by small producers in this country, copying a recipe or style and putting their own twang to it, they can be of fantastic quality," he adds. A good cheese depends on its milk, he adds. "I went recently to a milk tasting at Neal's Yard Dairy, where the cheesemakers of Stawley had been invited. I had only ever drunk supermarket-bought goats' milk. I tasted theirs which was rich, creamy buttery and sweet. There was an underlying tone which told you it was goat's milk not cow's milk, but it was very delicious. What they stressed was the importance of being very, very gentle with the milk. Stawley's milk has produced a beautiful cheese." Cottage cheese isn't a cheese type

which features regularly on these pages and the product isn't really a regular sight in the chillers of farm shops and delis. This would seem to indicate a gap in the market, and one maker who seems to have to noted this market gap is Holy Cow Organic, which produces, along with its Organic Soft Cheese, an Organic Cottage Cheese. Both of these items, says business development director Thomas Bourne, "are particularly popular for lighter eating with picnics, salads etc."

 The products came about, he says, because "everything we do is organic and we saw a gap in the market for a really good, high-provenance British-made organic soft cheese. All the milk used for Holy Cow comes from our own grass-fed herds in Devon. Our soft cheese is a lower fat (7%) cheese, slightly less firm in consistency than some of the higher fat commercial alternatives. The cottage cheese is a luxurious, but still low fat, version – with clearly defined curds within a creamy dressing."

Demand for cottage cheese is actually strong, and has seen a recent spike, Thomas says. "This is because it is a low fat, high protein food that appeals to the 'superfood' health-conscious audience." The products are a good fit with independent food retailers, Thomas says, especially with Holy Cow's "exciting, fresh, branding, which is designed to appeal to the target audience of farm shops and delis. As premium organic products, with unique provenance, they retail at a premium price point which has been tested and proven in the market."



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# MEET THE CHEESESELLER

Specialising in British cheeses and offering high standards of service has made The Cheese Shop a popular feature of Nottingham's city centre

**“W**e specialise in British cheeses – that’s our passion,” says Webb Freckingham who, together with his brother Rob, owns and runs The Cheese Shop, which is located in a covered walkway in Nottingham’s city centre. “We like to support the British farmer and the British cheesemaker. We do stock Continentals, but we probably have twice as many British cheeses.”

Webb’s love of British cheese may have something to do with being in one of the UK’s great cheesemaking regions. “We have Colston Bassett and Cropwell Bishop, and there’s Stichelton too,” he says. “Close by we have Lincolnshire Poacher and Sparkenhoe Red Leicester.” This, however, is not a shop where local is necessarily king. Webb’s personal favourite just now, he tells *Speciality Food* magazine, is “Isle of Wight Blue, which I think is absolutely gorgeous.”

Blues figure largely in the cheese counter here. “We stock Harbourne, Binham, Beenleigh, Lanark, Cornish, Colston Bassett, Beauvale, Stichelton, Burt’s Blue and Barkham Blue,” Webb says, before mentioning his smoked cheeses, which include Northumberland Smoked, Cumberland Smoked, Smoked Poacher, Smoked Stilton, Dorset Red and Simon Weaver’s Organic Smoked Brie.

Demonstrating the reach and range of his British cheeses, Webb draws attention to soft and other cheeses. “We also stock Tunworth, Winslade, Baron Bigod (what a cheese!), Waterloo, Bath Soft, Lord London, Stinking Bishop and Old Winchester. In fact, we stock anything with a good flavour, especially if it’s made on a smaller scale.”

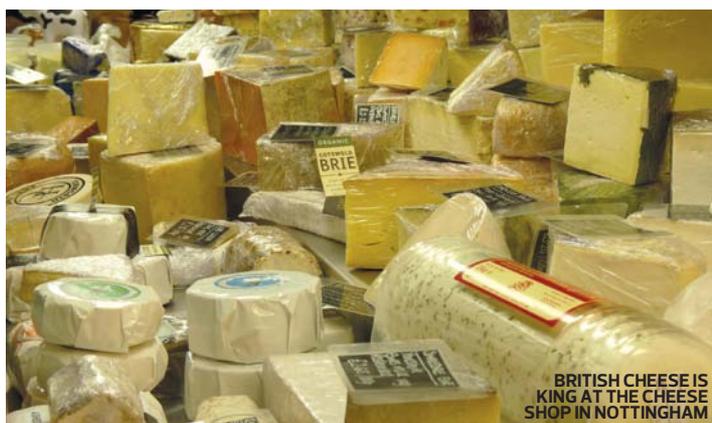
When it comes to sourcing his cheeses, Webb does a lot of business at the farm gate, he says. “We like to deal directly with the dairies, such as Golden Cross or Ann Wigmore, who makes brilliant cheeses like Wigmore, Waterloo and Spenwood. Dealing with cheesemakers direct means you get a better product. When I phone Jonny Crickmore at Baron Bigod, I will ask him to fill me a boxful. This is usually about eight cheeses, and he will include a couple that are ripeish, two that are not quite ready, two more that are further away and so on. This gives us a progression of getting the cheese perfect, and the ability to present it as ripe as the customer wants it. That’s the easiest way of doing it and avoids having all your stock with the same best before date on it.”

## Bigger premises

The cheeseshop came into being after Webb and Rob had arrived at one of life’s crossroads, Webb says. “I had just got divorced and my brother had lost an arm in an accident and couldn’t return to farming. I had been a chef, and wanted to get back into food. We looked at various possibilities and then we saw a little deli which was then owned by an elderly couple who wanted to retire. We thought we could do something with this place and so we took the plunge and turned up at the shop on the 10th December 2004, wondering what we had done. I had a small but not extensive knowledge of



OWNERS WEBB AND ROB FRECKINGHAM



BRITISH CHEESE IS KING AT THE CHEESE SHOP IN NOTTINGHAM

cheese. However, three years ago we moved to bigger premises, where we put in a café where we do coffee, teas and cheese platters and that kind of thing. It all works really well.”

The Cheese Shop’s customers “are anybody and everybody, from students to 80 and 90 year-olds,” Webb says. “We try to give everyone the sort of old fashioned service you can’t always find in other places. Shopping is boring at the best of times, so if you can have a laugh and let your personality come through, that’s how it works.”

The shop offers over 200 cheeses, but “nine times out of ten, when someone comes in, they will be looking for Stilton. Mainly, this is because of the area we are in. People want to take Stilton away as gifts. Just today, we cut and wrapped up a lot of Beauvale and Colston Bassett for a gentleman who is going to Italy. People are creatures of habit; we have another gentleman who comes in regularly and I know what he is going to have. It is always Montgomerie’s, Baron Bigod and Colston Bassett; he has these three every week. I have suggested that he try something else but he refuses, saying he likes these and would be disappointed with anything else.”

Some cheeses are rotated, he says, “while others, like the Monty’s, Isle of Mull, Lincolnshire Poacher and the Stiltons, have to be stock items because they are so popular. We do change things, though, if anything new comes along.” There’s also an element of seasonality to his stocking. “On St David’s Day, we stocked Golden Cenarth and some Perl Wen,” he says. “In winter, there is Mont d’Or which everybody looks forward to. Now, though, we have Winslade, our own version of Mont d’Or. I’d rather have Winslade but people have Mont d’Or – or Reblochon or Raclette – when they go skiing and want what they had there. Raclette has become a massive cheese in the years we have been selling it. Partly, this is because we can now get the little grill pans which years ago we didn’t have these. Raclette is a great, social way of eating.”

Tastes are broadening, he says. “I think we are more open to trying new things. There’s a lot of talk about shopping local but it’s my opinion that if a cheese is good in Cornwall, it will be good in Nottingham. If the product is good, it stands up, like the Isle of Wight blue. This won Gold at the 2007 World Cheese Awards and at the time we couldn’t get it. Now finally we can get it and it’s a stunning cheese which

deserves to have a wider audience. Another cheese selling well is Old Winchester, which “we also sell as a Parmesan substitute, because it’s vegetarian and Parmesan is not.”

## Key people

Webb widened his own knowledge of cheese “by working with it, reading books, meeting and talking to people,” he says. A particularly good place to encounter key people in cheese is the Artisan Cheese Fair at Melton Mowbray. “This is fantastic because you meet the actual cheesemakers, people such as Pete Humphries of White Lake, Clare Burt, Robin Scales from Colston Bassett and Philip Stansfield, who makes Cornish Blue.” Socialising with cheesemakers after the show has often changed the nature of his relationship with his supplier and makes future business more personal. “You are no longer just a voice on the phone. That’s what I like about it.” This can be a reciprocal relationship at times, he says. “When Stacey Hedges couldn’t come one year, we sold Tunworth for her and we have done the same for others.”

In Webb’s opinion, the Artisan Cheese Fair at Melton Mowbray “is rapidly becoming one of the best cheese festivals in the country.” This, he thinks, is because “it’s in Melton,

and Melton is based on Stilton and Pork Pies.” These products are closely related, he notes: “the pigs are fed on the whey from the cheese, a bi-product of the cheesemaking. I think there are close to 60 cheesemakers attending the show this year, which is fantastic. There’s also a tasting competition for small, artisan cheesemakers with a thousand pound prize, which is a massive leg up for a small cheesemaker.”

As well as promoting the shop on Facebook and Twitter, Webb is a regular guest speaker on local radio, which has proved a surprisingly effective medium. “Every six or eight weeks, we get invited to talk on BBC Radio Nottingham. I have said something on local radio and been amazed at how many people have turned up at the shop before I have got back from the BBC – it’s only a ten minute walk.”

“There is no secret to running a cheese shop successfully,” Webb says, “beyond hard work and having a smile. You must always be welcoming. People come here because they know what they will get. We have always said that we wouldn’t sell anything that we wouldn’t be prepared to eat ourselves and that’s a good mantra, encouraging you to look at things in a different light. Go with what you think, but never be stubborn or too old to learn something new. Also, bear in mind that just because an idea works well in one place doesn’t mean it will necessarily work for you. Give a new product time. Don’t expect it to jump off the shelf straight away, because it doesn’t always do that.”

If he were to add something to the shop’s offering, he says, “I would probably do hot cheese. We haven’t got cooking facilities here. We do talks and demonstrations to people like the WI and among the food we prepare is a sandwich with Parma Ham, truffle and Tunworth which we fry in butter. It gets an amazing response and makes us think that there’s a market for sandwiches like this.”

The Cheese Shop runs with a staff of five and one part-timer. “We keep them motivated by having a laugh with them and making them do things they may not want to,” Webb says. “In this way, every day is different. “Staff are encouraged to talk to people and engage them in a friendly chat. This should be the same, he says, “whether they are talking to a young lady at university or to the old couple who come in for a cappuccino and a toasted teacake. Everybody who comes in should be made to feel welcome.”



“ There’s a lot of talk about shopping local but it’s my opinion that if a cheese is good in Cornwall, it will be good in Nottingham. ”

Step aside Europe, British charcuterie is going from strength to strength. Here are some of the best



### 1 THREE LITTLE PIGS: Spicy Rare Breed Chorizo

A top drawer chorizo with a rich Yorkshire twist!

Made by Jon and Charlotte Clarkson on their free-range farm, Three Little Pigs uses pork from its own herd of rare breed pigs. Their first sow, Mavis, was a wedding gift, and since then the wellbeing of their pigs has been paramount.

Jon has developed all the recipes from scratch. "I have no ambition to simply copy European recipes and styles," he says. Instead, "I have developed my own flavours and techniques." He insists on only using the best quality ingredients, with

the Clarksons' very special pork, including Pimenton de La Vera. This approach has resulted in a host of stars at the Great Taste Awards, being selected as a Defra Food Star and acquiring a string of celebrity fans. Their latest accolade is winning a Good Pig Award from Compassion in World Farming for their free-range farming methods.

This is food made the slow way. Charlotte explains, "It takes more than nine months of love and dedication to produce this chorizo and salami in the fresh air of the Kiplingcotes Wold, so for either fine dining or sublime snacking, Yorkshire's best kept secret has it covered."

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

### 2 DELI FARM CHARCUTERIE: Wild Venison Bresaola

An award-winning charcuterie producer based in North Cornwall, Deli Farm Charcuterie have been winning awards since its launch in 2006 – no doubt thanks to its dedication to being as natural and local as it can be.

This passion is demonstrated in the ingredients – or lack thereof – used to make the charcuterie; only prime joints of meat from local producers make the cut, and the entire Deli Farm Charcuterie range contains no artificial colours, flavours, emulsifiers or phosphates.

The interest in sustainability doesn't end there, with the company using only 100% renewable energy.

"Our Wild Venison Bresaola is made with specially selected muscles of wild venison that have freely roamed and grazed the rich grasslands of various Westcountry Estates, cured in a special mix of salts and spices and then slowly dried and matured.

"It has a rich aroma, gamey flavour and a dark burgundy colour."

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



### 3 OXSPRINGS: British Air Dried Ham

Oxsprings is an Air Dried Ham aged for minimum of eight months made from British pork. The pork legs are sourced from RSPCA assured Freedom Food farms and are traceable throughout the production process.

Oxsprings is based on a smallholding near Pershore where the pork legs are cured and then aged in drying rooms. No artificial preservatives or additives are used in the process, just sea salt and time. "We offer a traditional and lightly smoked variety of Air Dried Ham," says Alex Oxspring, owner of Oxsprings. "The ham is sold in 85g packs, pre-sliced (6 slices), interleaved and has a 90 day use by date. We also offer deboned whole hams for deli slicing or Bone-in hams for carving from a stand.

"Oxsprings continues to grow its presence in both the retail and foodservice sectors. Having purchased the advanced Weber 305 slicer, the company is in the position to produce a lot more ham and with excellent interleaved presentation." [oxsprings.com](http://oxsprings.com)

### 4 CORNISH CHARCUTERIE: Seaweed & Cider Salami

Based on Barton Farm near Bude in North Cornwall, Cornish Farm Charcuterie was borne of a lifelong passion for food and the dream of an idyllic, rural life for Richard and Fionagh Harding.

This love of food translated into a business focused on farming traditional breeds in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way, in order to produce British charcuterie of the highest quality.

Kate Holland, marketing and communications at Cornish Charcuterie said, "Our unique Seaweed & Cider Salami is our Cornish-inspired variety, which uses seaweed harvested off the coast of St Ives and cider made on the North Coast of Cornwall. It has a delicious depth of flavour and a distinctive zing.

"Here at Norton Barton Farm, all our salamis are made using our British Log pigs and North Devon (Ruby) cattle, both bred and reared on our farm. The sausages are matured slowly with a light smoking over beach wood chips."

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



### 5 ROSS & ROSS: The Homemade Curing Kit... Bacon

Ross & Ross Food are a Cotswolds based fine food company specialising in Handmade British Food products, gifts and event catering. The DIY food trend has soared in recent years and people care far more about the use of British produce and the sourcing of their food. Supporting local butchers, artisan producers and experimenting with food at home are the key ingredients to getting people in the kitchen and making homemade meals.

Ross Bearman, co-founder/director explains, "We had been making premium British terrines and pâté for farm shops and delis when we started to notice the appetite for DIY food. Our Homemade Bacon Curing Kit came about in 2014 after we realised nobody was applying the DIY method in the charcuterie sector. Homemade Beer, Cheese and Sloe Gin have taken off in recent years so we thought it was time to get home curing trending. After all, bacon is the original British charcuterie so it made perfect sense to start with that."

Their best selling Curing Kit to date – Bacon – contains everything

you need to cure your own Original, Sweet and Smoky Bacon at home. Adopting the method of dry curing, Ross & Ross wanted to follow the traditional way of preserving meat. Each kit includes the three curing mixes, muslin, curing bags, gloves, hook and full instructions. All you need to do is add pork.

Following Britain's love of spice, their second kit – Spicy Bacon – introduced some more adventurous flavours. Using influences from gin and classic pork charcuterie, The Old English, Cotswold Chorizo and British BBQ cures give you bacon with some added zing within a week. [rossandrossfood.co.uk](http://rossandrossfood.co.uk)

## CHARCUTERIE

### 6 THE REAL CURE: Sloe Garlic Salami

Based in rural Dorset, The Real Cure use wild, locally sourced venison to create a range of hand-cured and smoked products including hams, chorizo, salami and bacon.

Inspired by his time working in the Scottish Highlands on a deer estate, the company was set up by James Smart in early 2015.

Traditional charcuterie recipes are given a British edge, like the Sloe & Garlic Smoked Salami, which combines foraged sloes with fresh garlic before being smoked over oak chips for three days. The Smoked Wild Venison Bacon has garnered much interest, tapping into a desire for healthier and delicious takes on traditional favourites. "It's fantastic to be part of the growing British Charcuterie movement and

exciting to experiment with locally-sourced game like venison," says James.

The Real Cure are not interested in imitation. Instead, what excites James is innovation. "We are privileged to have the opportunity to look at how the Italians, Spanish and French make their charcuterie with a fresh pair of eyes," he says. "Their recipes and techniques are time-honoured, but by putting in our own twists and turns we can create unique and exciting products." In this sense James sees the British charcuterie scene as being similar to the US craft beer movement: "The Americans took our beers and ripped up the rule book creating hoppy and exciting brews while still staying true to the underlying principles of brewing."

The deer that The Real Cure use are wild – this means that up until the moment that they are killed they have

lived a completely natural life, so they have never been fed by man, never been kept inside and have been free to roam and browse on a varied diet that any cow or sheep could only dream of.

People think of venison as being a gamey meat suitable only for heavy stews, but to James' mind this is a myth – for too long people have been put off venison as they were eating big, overhung red deer. The Real Cure uses smaller species like Sika, Fallow and Roe that are never hung for more than a week. "I couldn't even count the number of converts we have made to venison," James says, "it really is the greatest, most sustainable and healthiest meat that we have in the UK."

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



### 7 GREAT GLEN: Green Pepper Venison Salami

Great Glen Charcuterie is based in the rugged Highlands of Scotland and uses sustainably-sourced local wild venison from the surrounding area to make its charcuterie. Deer roam freely in the Scottish hills, feeding on heather, wild plants and grass, making wild venison a delicious, healthy and sustainable meat source. A family business established in 2003 by Jan Jacob and Anja Baak, over the years the company has evolved from full-time deer processing to specialised charcuterie production.

Jan Jacob and Anja had moved from the Netherlands with their young family to live and work in the beautiful and remote countryside of the Highlands of Scotland in 2000, and after much experimenting with venison, they built a wooden smoker in the garden and developed the first Venison Salami. Friends and family enjoyed the charcuterie and encouraged them to start the business.

The company operates from the old butcher shop in the small village of Roy Bridge in the Scottish Highlands and now supplies independent retailers and restaurants across the UK and abroad. Their six children are all involved in the business, helping out where they can, with production, packing orders and as tasting panel, while the older ones love selling the charcuterie at farmers markets and food festivals.

Great Glen's Green Pepper Venison Salami is made with pure venison and gently spiced with green peppercorns for the right balance. It was awarded three gold stars and Best Charcuterie product at the Great Taste Awards in 2013.

Anja Baak, co-founder says, "Venison is a healthy and sustainable meat. It is low in fat and high in iron, protein, vitamin B and essential omega 3 fatty acids, and contains 20% of the daily requirement of selenium and zinc. Only Great Glen Charcuterie's venison and pork products contain pork, all their other products are made with 100% wild Scottish venison. This makes them a healthy alternative to the more common pork-based charcuterie and also suitable for people who do not want to eat pork."

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



RETAILER'S CHOICE

### 8 SMOKED MUTTON Caprerolus Fine Foods

"Something we always try to do at Cannon & Cannon is encourage our producers to create truly British products which reflect their specific regionality, flora and fauna (the French might say 'terroir'). This superb air dried and smoked mutton is from Mennabroom Farm, Warleggan, Cornwall.

"It is on Bodmin Moor and the Black Faced sheep are free to roam on the moor and graze on heather. The meat is quite extraordinary and some customers are convinced they can taste the heather in the finished product which is artfully produced by David and Karen Richards of Caprerolus Fine Foods."

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



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## Allington Farm Shop near Chippenham has come a long way since it started trading in a car park shed

Long-established farm shops often began in a small way, with excess farm produce sold at the farm gate. The family-run Allington Farm Shop near Chippenham in Wiltshire went one better. After seeding their business in a tin shed in the car park, Paul and Jenny Reynolds, having had "a few planning issues," moved their nascent farm shop into a library bus, which was driven around the farm yard. Clearly, this was going to be a business to watch.

And so it has proven. The present incarnation of Allingtons is a very smart and highly professional business. Food is displayed in attractive counters or stacked with an eye to visual impact and there are pleasing areas in which visitors can relax. Shop manager, Naomi Reynolds, explains how the shop developed: "To start with, we just sold potatoes and the eggs which our chickens laid. We are in a very good vegetable growing area and we source these vegetables locally and go to the fruit and vegetable market in Bristol four times a week. We grow most of our own potatoes. Eventually, my father-in-law managed to get planning permission and we built the original part of the shop, which opened in 1981. Since then we have grown and



THERE'S A STRONG SHOWING OF LOCAL CHEESES AT ALLINGTON



A WIDE RANGE OF VEGETABLES ARE SOURCED LOCALLY

grown. We had quite a few battles with planning over the years. It took us several years and a lot of pushing to get planning permission for the big extension, when we put in a new butchery and deli. We also added a café, which is run by my sister-in-law and is a great asset to us." In 2001 the farm, whose animals all go through the shop, Naomi says, was visited by foot and mouth disease. "It hit us badly and at that point we were thinking in terms of closing the shop." However, the family battled adversity and ironically, it was out of that same

crisis, they think, that the interest in local food was kicked off. "It sparked the public's interest in finding out where their food comes from," Naomi says. "Foot and mouth was make or break for us. Once that had passed, the shop really took off. My father in law seems to have had a lot of foresight. Every Christmas we were taking down walls and making the shop bigger. We even added a tent to the front. I can remember a lot of late nights trying to fit more things in. That was when we knew it was going to get busier and busier. The shop has gone from strength to strength since then."

The farm shop now attracts something in the region of 2,000 visitors a week, and the average basket spend is around £17. A lot of custom is from the surrounding

area. "We get a lot of local support here," Naomi says. "We are right on the edge of Chippenham, so we are in a very good position, but there are lots of villages surrounding us as well. We also attract trade from tourists who come to the area to visit the nice villages in the area, places like Castle Combe." The farm shop is well-situated, being positioned "right on the side of a main road where we are easily visible to people going past."

A big draw for custom is the shop's meat, and the in-store butchery provides a large part of the shop's turnover. "When people think of getting a nice joint of meat, they do think of farm shops," Naomi says. "One of the things people really care about is how meat has been produced. They obviously

know that we produce the meat ourselves here and that the animal has had a good life and it has not been given anything nasty to eat. They also know that the meat is of a high quality. There is a big difference between the quality of the meat that we sell and that of the meat sold in the supermarket. We make a lot of sausages ourselves. These and our rib of beef and steaks are big sellers."

Allington Farm Shop offers "a very good range of cheeses," Naomi says. "We sell a lot of local ones, including Ceri Cryer's cheeses from Brinkworth Dairy, which is very close to us. We also sell Godminster Cheddar and cheese from the Old Cheese Room at Neston Park, which also is very close. Our best-selling cheese is



THE SHOP "LIKES TO MAKE A SPLASH" WITH ITS AMBIENTS AND DRY GOODS

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probably our Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company Cheddar. We also sell a few Continentals." To accompany the cheese, Allington offers a good display of ambients from makers including Tracklements. "We like to make a good splash of these," Naomi says. "We have a really large section of preserves and we are well known for offering a good choice of these lines."

Hampers are a strong seller at Allington Farm Shop. "We sell several hundred at Christmas," Naomi says. "But they actually sell well all year round. We have a really good selection of baskets. People can choose just what they like to go in them and doing this makes makes a hamper a nice personal gift." Children (and those with a sweet tooth) are catered for by a dedicated confectionery area and young, restless customers can be diverted with a purchase of a Tractor Ted and Farmer Tim book.

One of the first considerations for Naomi when it comes to



stocking is offering support to good, local producers who make high quality produce. Among the local products stocked at Allington Farm Shop are Marshfield ice cream and Lick the Spoon chocolates. "Stock isn't something you ever get right," she says. "It's continually changing. I am always looking at new things and trying them out. I'd say we stock quite a large range of foods and quite often, people will come to us with their products."

"We also like to visit food shows such as Speciality Fine Food Fair and Farm Shop & Deli Show whenever we can." Among the changes in buying habits Naomi has noted have been the rise of gluten-free foods and products catering to certain dietary requirements, both of which have seen market growth. Another change in habits, she says, is that "people are returning to making their own meals rather than buying ready-made meals or the ready-made sauces."

Naomi says that Allington Farm Shop holds "regular tasting events where we ask some of our suppliers

to come and do tastings." Those, she says, "go really well." Another regular event which has proven successful is the Cherished Vehicle and Farm Fun Day. This is run for charity in conjunction with the Chippenham Lions Club, Naomi says. "That event has been going for five years and it has really taken off. We have between three and four thousand people come to the farm on those days. There are lots of old cars and we create displays with our old farm machinery. There are farm animals to see and a hog roast and barbecue. It has become an annual event which goes really well and is a great day out. The Fun Day attracts people who might not normally visit a farm shop."

The farm shop has of course made strong efforts to lure in such potential customers. "For the last couple of years we have had a mini Allington marquee out in the field, just to try and make more people aware of what we do and allow them to taste some of our produce. The Fun Day definitely attracts a different sort of customer, which



is good for us." It's not the only feature which draws and keeps customers at Allingtons longer. "The café is very popular and the hamburgers go very well. The café helps people to make more of a trip of their visit. They have some lunch and then take a look round the shop. We quite often have the farm animals out in the field so people can take a look over the fence at them."

The secret to running a farm shop successfully is hard work, Naomi says, adding "you've got to be passionate about food and about where it has come from and we are all passionate about the farm and what we do. You've also got to have a good balance of produce on sale. The quality has got to be there for the people to keep coming back." Good customer service is very important, she says. "We are a family-run business where we are

known for offering friendly service. "The 20-strong staff are picked for being "really well motivated." It's important that they enjoy customer contact and ensuring that customers are happy, Naomi says.

The work, she says, can be relentless. "The shop is open seven days a week and only closes for a couple of days after Christmas. Finding the right sort of people can also be difficult. But this is a job which is very rewarding too. I really enjoy the customer contact." If she had to start all over, Naomi says, she would think in terms of starting with more space, because the shop has "always been catching up with the business." And business, she says, is very good at present. The shop has experienced an upswing since the end of the recession and the last Christmas and Easter were especially good.



“ When people think of getting a nice joint of meat, they think of farm shops. They care about is how meat has been produced. ”



“ If your bank says no, it’s not the end of your expansion plan, it’s the start of finding the bank which will say yes ”

# Retail School

Want to avoid the banks?  
Paul Clapham explains how you can

**S**o you have traded with a bank for an extended period. You have a good history with them. You are growing and they know it. Then you go to see them and say you are planning expansion, for which you will need finance. In essence, you want a loan, perhaps of significant size, to achieve the growth you are aiming for.

It's a testing moment, but you have a sound business plan to justify that loan and how it will be repaid, as well as making you a more valuable customer. You may well be at the same time seeking an overdraft facility, or extension to an existing arrangement. The bank should say yes, shouldn't they?

Unfortunately, it quite often doesn't happen. Banks are increasingly looking to provide finance as risk-free as they can. As a case, a loan has to be secured against the business owner(s) personal assets, classically their home. They may well refuse an extended overdraft, recommending instead a factoring arrangement. They may also demand some hefty fees for what you want.

You walk out the door feeling dispirited and disgruntled. The immediate temptation is to 'go next door' to another high street bank. The aggro and cost of the switch will probably put you off, but the reality is that they are likely to be equally unready to back your sound proposal. What then?

Here's a simple fact: the high street banks are not the only

source of business finance. If your bank says no, it's not the end of your expansion plan, it's the start of finding the bank which will say yes.

The National Association of Commercial Finance Brokers (NACFB) was created in 1992 as a self-regulatory body for the Commercial Finance Industry. A not-for-profit organisation, its purpose is to help businesses find funding from a wide range of lenders and through regulated and reputable commercial brokers.

The lenders they work with are active in the fields of commercial mortgages, leasing and asset finance, factoring, vehicle finance, buy-to-let, cashflow funding and development loans.

Their 1,600 members are spread right across the UK, and SMEs can find the best broker for any given finance requirement through the website [findSMEfinance](http://findSMEfinance.co.uk) ([findsmefinance.co.uk](http://findsmefinance.co.uk)).

The larger the business loan required, the more vital are the services of the broker. Borrowers who minimize the size of the loan they want – in the belief that large requests are more likely to receive a 'no' from the lender – may be heading in the wrong direction. It simply isn't true that lenders don't want to lend, it's just that the wrong type of lender will still decline a loan application. Far better to work with a broker who can see

the big picture and can say "have you considered x?" or "why don't you try z?".

In fact, some of the loan requests NACFB see are at least as much requests for advice as for money: small business owners wanting someone else to have a look around and spot what the next step should be.

The Association has met more than 50 new lenders in the last 12 months, all looking to fill niches within niches, bringing the number of lenders they work with to 140.

Demand is more than keeping pace with supply. To take an example, the Peer 2 Peer Finance Association (currently made up of nine lenders) reports that its members completed more than £2 billion in lending last year, around double the figure from 2014. Keep up that rate of growth, and soon Alternative Finance will have to manage the tricky shift away from being seen as Alternative. At the same time the Alternative Finance field is trying to find the right language to convey positively how different it is.

Providers are focusing more tightly on specific areas of finance. Hence there are options for pension-led funding, specialist funders for marine assets, lenders who will work with start-up businesses, lenders who want to target solar panels and so on. The volume of different lenders is crowding the marketplace and what that's doing is pushing new lenders into the unoccupied gaps. All good news for small businesses who think they'll get rejected by the banks they've heard of – there are plenty who are not household names and who have a positive incentive to lend.

Shorter term financing offers some non-bank routes that might make your hair stand on end – at first. I was told of someone who used his American Express card to start his business. Superficially, it sounds mad. But if the cashflow is there and growing, it could be a solution. This guy managed it with absolute care and saw it as a zero percent overdraft facility. Not to be sniffed at.

Would you go to a pawnbroker to help fund the business? Personally, I would have run screaming from the idea – until I talked to one. First, pawnbrokers are regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Second, they don't charge arrangement fees like banks do. Third, you get your money very rapidly. Fourth, you can repay 'Uncle' before the end of the loan period with no premium. If buying with cash could significantly reduce your costs, this might be worth a look. You'd typically need some quality watches or jewellery as collateral.





# SMOKING TILLS

Demand for smoked foods grows as the number of foods available to the independent market increases

**W**hat smoked foods do you stock? Very probably, you stock smoked salmon and might be thinking of adding smoked trout. You may too have noted the popularity of smoked processed cheese and added one or two smoked artisan Cheddars or other smoked cheeses. And, having seen a decent take-up of these products, you may have dipped your toe into the ever-expanding range of smoked foods now being offered to independent food retailers, foods such as smoked garlic, smoked sauces, smoked salt, butter, pâtés, duck, hams, mussels – all kinds of smoked meats, in fact – and even smoked beer.

People who smoke food have learned to be as subtle with their art as the salmon smokers, in the best cases introducing just enough smoke to add a new aspect to the product without masking the original flavour, and a strong market has been created which in some cases has doubled the sales potential of the original foodstuff. Smoked food can appeal to people who like strong flavours and also to those who like to see a spin put on a favourite product. We asked two independent retailers about which smoked products were doing well for them, and what they thought was the sector's appeal.



In Pitlochry, high on the list of speciality foods prized by The Scottish Deli are its range of smoked delicacies, says owner Simon

Yearsley. "Our sourcing strategy is always to start local, so all our smoked products are from Scotland, with the smoked salmon coming from Dunkeld Smoked Salmon, just 30m across the road. We also stock many products from the renowned Rannoch Smokery: their chicken breast smoked with juniper is a real favourite, but we also stock their beef, duck and ever-popular venison."

Among the smoked cheeses selling well at The Scottish Deli, he says, are "Inverloch's wonderful Isle of Kintyre Applesmoke Mature Cheddar, which looks stunning in its red wax shell. Other less obvious smoked products include peat smoked Hebridean Sea Salt and Summer Harvest Oak-Smoked Rapeseed Oil from the lovely folk over in Crieff. Graham Johnston runs Smoky Brae in South Lanarkshire and produces a delicious cold-smoked sugar with bags of appeal and lots of flavour. Finally, one of our favourite Scottish chocolatiers, Charlotte Flower, does a great single origin Java chocolate with Smoked Hebridean Sea Salt." Absolute essential smoked stocks: "Dunkeld Smoked Salmon and

Rannoch Smoked Chicken, Kintyre Applesmoke and Charlotte Flower's excellent chocolate."

In Simon's view, there are a number of good reasons why stocking smoked foods makes a lot of sense. "The smoked products that we stock are all made in Scotland," he says, "and are all artisan-produced food products. We think that this is an important part of their appeal for customers. Added to that is the way that smoking food adds a bit of oomph to the flavour. Using smoked chicken in sandwiches is incredibly popular as the flavours marry well with a range of subtler foods such as Mozzarella, or work alongside something a bit gutsier such as a garlicky pesto. Smoking is a great, old fashioned way of preserving food, and maybe that's something that we all respond to."

## Smoky flavour

Smoking techniques have improved radically in recent years, Simon says. "There are more subtle gradations of flavour and strength of smokiness now, along with an emphasis on using a wider variety of materials for smoking to achieve a bigger range of flavours. In the past it was often smokey flavourings which created the taste, but now there are many more folk who are 'proper' smokers."

For us, it's important that smoking enhances the flavour of a food rather than masks it. We stock smoked products where the makers have balanced the satisfying smoky flavour that customers enjoy with a subtlety that allows high quality produce to shine – it's not just a big, macho smoke flavour. Beware of smokeries who focus too much on the smoke, and not enough on the food!"

Simon sees a constant demand for smoked foods. "Customers are always interested in trying something new and we see that smoked foods do offer something a bit different and quirky in a similar way to the salted caramel craze that's been with us for a while. We find that smoked foods are the classic deli speciality food –

it's not like buying a box of cornflakes from your local supermarket – the more you engage customers in smoked foods, and take the time to explain, describe and enthuse, the more the demand will grow."

Walsingham Farm Shops in Norfolk stock "a range of products with a focus on locally produced and made foods, including various smoked fish and prawns and roe from Clew Smokehouse, just a short drive down the coast road,"

says general manager, Sam Bagge. "We often stock a smoked cheese."



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The Germans make brilliant smoked cheeses, but more and more English cheese makers are looking at this as an option. We sell in-house cooked smoked hams in our delis, and smoked bacon, streaky bacon and gammons in our butchery. Smoked meats are so popular now that we are looking at investing in a smoker to give us the ability to in-house smoke. We also sell smoked garlic from The Garlic Farm. It's currently one of our best-selling vegetable items." Absolute essential smoked stocks: "the Cley Smokehouse kipper, bloater and smoked prawns are always key lines for us. Smoked salmon, however, is something no shop can be without."

For Sam, the longer shelf life of these products is part of their appeal. "However, the almost rustic flavour the smoking process gives food is very trendy at the moment. Historically, smoking would have been used to preserve food and also to mask flavours of meats and fish perhaps not in their prime. These days smoking is purely used to enhance the eating experience. Food trends seem to change all the time. Going 'old school' is quite trendy at the moment and I think smoked foods fall into this category, with the history of smoking foods in years gone by. Certainly, demand hasn't dropped for our key products (bacon, smoked salmon etc). If anything, there seems to have been a slight increase."



The taste for smoking has spread to all sorts of commodities which might not have been

considered only a few years ago. Stag Bakeries, which has enjoyed considerable success with innovative lines such as seaweed flavoured biscuits, oatcakes and shortbread, now offers smoked butter oatcakes. "We don't smoke the biscuits, but instead smoke some of the ingredients – butter and oats," qualifies Jenny Burton, head of sales & marketing. "We wanted to try a different approach to our traditional Scottish Oatcake but retain provenance, and this is how the idea of smoking the butter and oats at a local smokery came about."

To achieve the desired taste, Jenny says, "the oats and butter are smoked at Sornoway Smokehouse, the last remaining traditional smokehouse in the Scottish Hebrides. They smoke the oats and butter for 10 hours on racks in a seasoned brick kiln over smouldering embers of oak and beech chips." Smoking the ingredients, she says, "brings more complexity to the anticipated flavour profile of traditional Scottish Oatcakes. It leaves a distinct, smokey, rich flavour that does not overpower." Because the products are traditional Scottish oatcakes, Jenny recommends that they are cross-sold with Stilton and Cheddar, but "they also work equally

well with fish and paté and are good on their own, too."

One smoked sector which is seeing expansion is smoked cheese. The appeal of these cheeses lies in their distinctive flavour, says Ros Windsor, managing director of Paxton & Whitfield. "When an artisan cheese is smoked well, the smokiness enhances the original flavour of the cheese, creating something unique and extremely moreish." However, she adds, "From my experience, in tasting smoked cheeses and from talking to cheesemakers, there is a very fine balance to be achieved in preserving the flavour of the original cheese after smoking."

A fine example of a good, balanced, smoked artisan cheese, Ros says, "is Lincolnshire Poacher. Tim and Simon Jones produce this delicious cheese by cold-smoking the new cheeses over untreated dampened oak chips for 24 hours. Cold smoking gives the cheeses a golden brown colour and a delicate smoked aroma and flavour, through which the distinctive Poacher characteristics of fruity and sweet nuttiness are still evident." If you are thinking of cross-selling accompaniments with your smoked cheeses, Ros says, opt for "simple accompaniments that enhance but don't overpower the special flavours of these cheeses. Pickled onions, full-flavoured beers, a bold cider and a full-flavoured red wine with perhaps a little spice, such as a Zinfandel, can be really good matches."

“ There are more subtle gradations of flavour and strength of smokiness now, along with an emphasis on using a wider variety of materials for smoking to achieve a bigger range of flavour ”

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# MEET THE PRODUCER

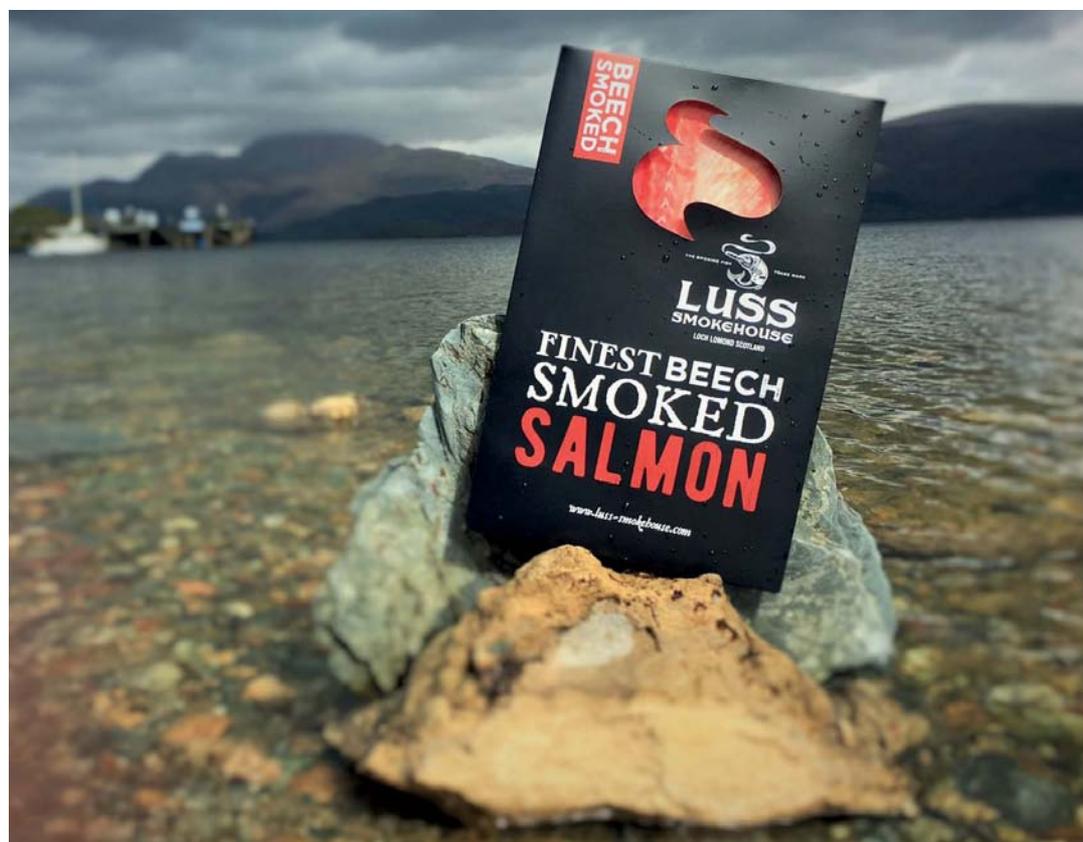
A new smokehouse on the banks of Loch Lomond is all set to challenge tradition

“Luss Fine Foods has been set up in the village of Luss on the Western shores of Loch Lomond to use produce from on and around the Luss estate,” says general manager Neil Irvine. “We will be creating high-end quality, luxury products using the best that Scottish nature can give us. Luss Fine Foods will be offering an exciting range of products that we can sell into restaurants, delis, farm shops and similar places.”

The first stage in establishing this ambitious new concern has been the building of a smokehouse, which was begun in the summer of 2015, since when Neil and his small team have been smoking salmon and perfecting a recipe for smoked trout – the company is planning to “have an extensive range of smoked fish products by the end of the year.” The salmon is farmed in the Atlantic Ocean, west of the Luss estate.

In stage two, Neil says, “the world is our oyster, as we have so much in the way of premium ingredients to choose from. Thoughts are of using some of the culled venison from the estate to produce charcuterie and smoked meats. In stage three, I personally would love to start making some cheese, using various sheep and goat farmers in the area to supply us with milk. It’s a very broad remit of food and the one other riding factor is that it all has to be the highest quality we can achieve. We want to take the long and steady road to creating products rather than rushing things for the sake of economics. We would much rather spend time getting the product right.”

The smokehouse opened at the beginning of this year, but the team has been trial-smoking since the previous November. “Part of the joy of the job is that we get to experiment with different cures and smokes,” Neil says. “A vast proportion of what we have smoked in the early months we have either eaten ourselves or destroyed because it was not quite up to our high standards. Much of the fun and



the adventure is tweaking those recipes and procedures, sometimes in the most minute way, just to satisfy our hunger for perfection.”

“We buy in very small salmon, which are more muscular than the typical industry sized fish. In the Atlantic

farms they have had to work hard against the current and they are consequently very muscular. There is very little fat on them when they come in, which gives the flesh a nicer texture. Because there is less fat, there is less water and water is

the thing you are trying to get rid of in curing and smoking. In our basic curing process for instance, we use only salt – we don’t need to use sugar and that leaves us with a much purer fish flavour. When you start adding sugar into cures, you then

have to start adding other flavours, normally big, heavy, smokey oak flavours to hide that sweetness.

“We source as sustainably as we can. One of our team has had a long relationship with the farms we use and we know that they are working hard to be as sustainable and responsible as possible. Personally, I don’t want to touch wild stock; I think they should be left to swim in the seas and rivers and do what wild fish should do. Our small fish have a texture much like wild salmon anyway, it’s a much firmer flesh. This means we can get much closer to the product we want without harming the wild stock.”

Luss Fine Foods enjoys an idyllic and yet practical location. “The village is only about 35 or 40 minutes from Glasgow and we are effectively Glasgow’s closest smokehouse,” Neil says. “From a logistics point of view, this is fantastic because we can get couriers in and out of here daily to deliver next day anywhere in the UK. But we are also rural enough to get on with our little experiments and adventures in food and not be affected by the busy world of the nearby city.” Luss Fine Foods has had fantastic support from the Earl of Luss and his family, Neil says. The wish is “to create small cottage industries based on quality to try and bring people back to live and work on the estate.”

Luss Fine Foods smoked salmon has been well received and Neil attributes its “astronomical growth” not only to the fine quality of the product itself, but also to the packaging, which “looks fresh, young and vibrant.” Luss Fine Foods “is setting itself apart from the traditional smokehouses,” Neil says. “Our image looks very different and we are being very creative with some of our recipes. Rather than going the supermarket route like some others, we want to work with retailers who really care about their produce.”

“ We will be creating high-end quality, luxury products using the best that Scottish nature can give us ”

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# CRUNCH TIME

Sweet and savoury biscuits are an ever-popular stalwart of the independent shelf. Here, we share what to stock now



Artisanal, handmade biscuits have long been a popular purchase at delis, farm shops and food halls, but consumers are now looking for more than a buttery shortbread biscuit or a cookie with the perfect crumble. The trends we're seeing across the fine food sector – a growth of interest in provenance, ingredients and eco credentials among others – are as present in the biscuit world as they are everywhere else, both sweet and savoury.



One producer shouting their eco credentials from the rooftops is Isle of Mull-based Island Bakery, the founders of which, Dawn and Nick Reade, adopted the philosophy which has helped shape the growth of their business from day one. Dawn explains, "Joe and I both studied geography at university and we have

always been aware of environmental issues and the impacts that various practices have on the planet. It just makes sense on every front to do our best to try to minimise any negative effects that a manufacturing process could have. Being based on the Isle of Mull makes it easy to appreciate what a beautiful natural environment is, and what value that has for everyone. The island's wet and windy weather has the potential to generate lots of renewable energy, which we have been able to harness to power the factory rather than burning oil, gas or electricity generated from fossil fuel. And we feel that using organic ingredients adds another level of responsible practice when it comes to looking after our world, not to mention that they taste amazing!"

The brand's eco credentials don't stop there; its dedication to organic has played a part in the business since the very beginning. "We are

## WALKERS



Walkers has been one of the most recognisable brands on the biscuit shelf for generations.

Here, Jim Walker, CEO explains what has made the business such a success.

"Walkers Shortbread is the world's leading shortbread brand, with more than 110 years baking heritage behind it. Renowned for premium quality, Walkers uses only the finest ingredients in the baking process, offering luxurious products through traditional baking techniques.

"The extensive Walkers Shortbread range celebrates over 200 products, including its famous pure butter Shortbread, Belgian chocolate cookies, fruit cakes and even meringues – to name a few. One of the most world

famous and popular variants in the vast Walkers Shortbread range are the All Butter Shortbread Fingers, a traditional baked product which features a unique bite and crumbly, buttery texture and taste.

"The modern palette is always subtly changing as more unusual flavours are being introduced into the market. Although this does not directly affect the popularity of traditional all butter shortbread, it means that we have been able to develop and innovate new variants, including our new White Chocolate & Raspberry biscuits."



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an organic producer and have been accredited by the Soil Association since we baked our first biscuits in 2001," Dawn explains. "This means all our ingredients are traceable back to the organic farms where the wheat was grown for the flour, or the cows were milked for the butter. Farms that will operate strict animal welfare standards, and look after their land without pesticides or chemical fertilisers, meaning that none of the harmful residues from such things can make it into the biscuits. It also means that we must follow organic criteria for what we can't use in our recipes – things like artificial colours, for example."

In the past, the ingredients used by food producers to create their organic items were limited, but these days the availability of organic ingredients is widening. This is demonstrated in the impressive range of flavours Island Bakery offers, which proudly span

both traditional and modern flavours: "No Scottish biscuit maker can go without shortbread, which is where the traditional side of our offer begins," Dawn says. "To complement that we make Oat Crumbles with lots of oats, butter and honey. Another long-standing favourite flavour combination is reflected in our Chocolate Gingers which have a generous piece of stem ginger in the middle and a thick dunking of organic dark chocolate." That is where the traditional leanings end, and Island Bakery's recipes get a little more inventive, as Dawn explains.

"I'd say the Apple Crumbles, while they are based on a classic pudding, begin to edge away from the standard biscuit varieties. Our Lemon Melts are our top-sellers – they are a very modern but simple lemon biscuit dipped in gorgeous organic Belgian white chocolate, which people find hard to resist. Finally, the Chocolate Limes, while similar to the Lemon

Melts in style, have a much more unique flavour, with lime oil and dark chocolate."



This sea change in the biscuit market has also been profitable for Peter's Yard, fast becoming one of our industry's stand-out producers of the past few years. Wendy Wilson-Bett, co-founder of Peter's Yard explains.

"Since founding Peter's Yard in the UK market eight years ago, it has been an exciting time in the savoury biscuit market," she says. "A growing public awareness of the benefits of eating well has led to the discerning British consumer switching away from buying sweet biscuits and deep-fried crisps to savoury biscuits and baked snacks.

"We have also witnessed a willingness of people to pay for

'proper' food, made with care and without artificial ingredients. All our crispbread recipes use simple, natural ingredients and our precious sourdough that is allowed to ferment for 16 hours before each batch of crispbread is baked. Eight years ago, many people didn't understand what sourdough was but now we see bakers across the UK baking sourdough loaves and consumers recognising the benefits it brings to taste, texture and even health.

The modern thinking displayed by the creators of Peter's Yard biscuits extends to gathering inspiration from

abroad. "Although our crispbreads are made in the UK, our recipes are inspired by our love of Swedish baking," Wendy says. When it comes to flavours, Peter's Yard "selects flavours that are distinctly different from each other yet subtle enough to allow the cheese or topping to take the limelight. Here in the UK, we have a host of great cheese producers and increasingly we see people looking for premium accompaniments to great artisan cheese." After all, Wendy says, "If you are spending money on great cheese, why compromise by skimping on the cheese biscuits?"

FROM THE RETAILER...

Abigail Bumstead, head of retail at Suffolk Food Hall, shares the retailer's top selling biscuit lines

WHAT SWEET BISCUIT BRANDS DO YOU SELL?

Biscuits are a popular product with our customers so we stock a wide selection. We have a small artisan producer – Nuthouse Shortbread from Essex – who make a rich and buttery selection of shortbread biscuits and range of delicious flavours. We also stock Huntley & Palmers (who are based in Norwich) cookies, Island Bakery Melts and Tuckey's digestives to name but a few!

AND WHAT SAVOURY BRANDS?

Alongside our fantastic range of local cheeses in the deli we sell a lovely range of savoury biscuits from The Fine Cheese Company as well as savoury nibbles from Cottage Delight and Seggiano.

WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR?

Our most popular sweet biscuit is the double chocolate cookie from Huntley & Palmers – our customers can't resist them and neither can we!

WHAT DO YOU THINK CONSUMERS ARE LOOKING FOR WHEN THEY SHOP FOR SWEET/SAVOURY BISCUITS?

I think people like to find something new and interesting in terms of

flavours and packaging, however, as you can see from our best-seller, when people find a good chocolatey cookie they come back for more!

HAS THIS CHANGED IN RECENT YEARS?

I think trends coming over from Europe have influenced what people will try, and this has made them more interested in trying something a little different.

ARE YOUR BISCUIT SALES AT ALL AFFECTED BY SEASONALITY?

Biscuits are a consistent seller for us all year round but we do see a seasonal spike through the festive period due to the biscuit selections we stock. Biscuits are a popular gift alone or as a nice addition to a gift hamper.

ARE THERE ANY WEIRD AND WONDERFUL FLAVOURS OF BISCUIT YOU'VE COME ACROSS RECENTLY AND ENJOYED?

Salted Caramel and Peanut Butter are both really popular flavours in confectionery generally at the moment and they are coming through in to the biscuit ranges this year. Mixing something slightly savoury with sweet seems to be a popular choice.

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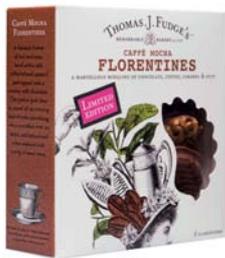
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**FARM SHOP FAVOURITE...**

**Louisa Mayor, sales and new product development manager at Farmhouse Biscuits Ltd explains what makes the brand so popular with independents and consumers alike**

**WHAT MAKES FARMHOUSE BRAND A GOOD FIT WITH FARM SHOPS AND DELIS?**

Our business was started on a farm over 50 years ago, and as a family-owned and run business with a strong sense of customer loyalty and traditional beliefs we feel our brand is perfect for the farm shop and deli market. This type of customer wants to go out and buy something special that isn't readily available in the mass market. We source only the finest ingredients and where we can we will buy these locally. We have never compromised on our quality or taste and the traditional look of our biscuits is very appealing – all at an affordable price. We have stayed true to our roots and have continued to make delicious

traditional biscuits often using traditional recipes and always using traditional baking methods.

**WHAT SORT OF APPEAL DOES THE BLACK & WHITE RANGE OFFER?**

Our iconic black and white packaging has remained relatively unchanged for many years. We often debate changing the design and style but the range still sells extremely well for us and is easily recognized; its simple design gives the consumer the chance to see the product in its entirety, and we have seen the popularity of simplistic packaging styles of late – craft boards, uncoated finishes and the use of natural materials – give the traditional look a real boost. Our range of 21 flavours is varied

and covers most people's tastes and desires. Our latest additions of Treacle Crunch and Oat & Sultana are proving to be really popular and we feel there is a flavour for everyone. I have to mention that the biscuits are extremely moreish which does help!

**WHAT MAKES YOUR GIFTING RANGE A GOOD FIT WITH FARM SHOPS AND DELIS?**

We take a lot of time each year studying our range and looking for new attractive designs to put on our packaging. Our gifting range is major part of our business. The ideas we develop cover traditional and contemporary tastes alongside those looking for a little bit of fun. Our packaging and our product is of a very high standard, to us what is inside the packaging is just as important as the way it looks. Going back to my earlier point, the farm shop and deli shopper is looking for something unique and special and that's exactly what you get with our gifting range. We are often told that our range and designs are by far the best!

“ As a family-owned and run business with a strong sense of customer loyalty and traditional beliefs we feel our brand is perfect for the farm shop and deli market ”

# HOW TO RUN A SUPER DELI

Robin Goldsmith investigates what deli owners can do to boost revenue and stay ahead of the game

**A** delicatessen can take many shapes and sizes, from a small high street shop or deli café to an out-of-town food hall with a deli counter. According to Mintel, 10.95% of consumers polled used a deli in the last three months, while specialist food and drink retailers, which include delicatessen, saw their sales increase by 1.5% to £10.6 billion in 2015. The Association of Convenience Stores found that specialist food stores were fifth out of 12 categories of shops having a positive impact on the local area, and represented the top most wanted shop service within a community. So given this scenario, what should deli owners do to satisfy demand, improve their turnover and keep ahead of the competition?

## Know your customer

Knowing your clientele is vital and this depends on location and season, with different challenges facing delis located in rural versus urban areas. Islington's Pistachio & Pickle comprises a deli/brunch café and a separate artisan cheese shop with wine section, plus eat-in and food-to-go options which vary according to the season. Owners Matt Kelly and Steve Cooper

describe how their location affects footfall at different times of the day: "Most people walk to the deli and don't need to rely on resident-only parking permits. Our customer flow changes constantly, starting with early morning commuters, then mums returning from the school run and locals having weekday brunch. After that, neighbouring businesses and home workers constitute most of our lunch trade, before the afternoon lull and evening commuters." Aleksandar Loncar of Golborne Deli & Bistro adds a note of caution: "Location is very important, but if you are not on a high street you have to work much harder to attract locals and regulars. Also, deli items are not average products and cost more to obtain, especially if you are trying to source locally. You must be in an area where consumers appreciate quality, good food and have the ability to pay."

## Set yourself apart

Whatever the season, delis located in tourist resorts or out-of-town rural areas may need to become 'go-to' destinations to attract new visitors and retain existing ones. Mark Kacary from the award-winning Norfolk Deli

explains further: "Our footfall differs during the course of a year, so we have to make most of our money during summer and the week before Christmas. When someone visits a deli, they are looking for something special, things they typically can't find elsewhere which are often made nearby, using local ingredients. People visit us because they do not want mass-produced goods, and our lines include food we make ourselves. If something is genuinely homemade with fresh ingredients and not filled with factory-made preservatives, it will sell!" Theodore Kyriakou from The Greek Larder agrees: "For delis to remain successful in the future, they should be unique and individual, providing excellent quality items not available in the supermarkets. A good delicatessen makes things fresh from scratch, even curing and roasting its own meat."

## Service is key

Although quality is a major selling point, the importance of good, knowledgeable service cannot be overstated. Kelly and Cooper invest time and energy in training their workforce, equipping them with



PISTACHIO & PICKLE: "CUSTOMER FLOW CHANGES CONSTANTLY"

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extra information so that they can sell with confidence. "Customers love hearing stories about producers and products, which builds trust between retailer and consumer and helps to overcome the occasional hurdle of a higher price point." In addition, personality is a huge factor and forms one of their key brand values. "Our strategy focuses on employing staff with personality who may have less experience in the industry, but share our values and understand the significance of good service." Caroline Muir of Spanish food specialist Brindisa offers a further perspective: "You need trust in provenance and the stories being marketed. If food looks and sounds great, then the quality should reflect that. We have built a relationship with our suppliers spanning three decades, so can pass on our trust in them to the consumer. Additionally, we place particular value on quality control, so that food remains in optimum condition. This means employing not just passionate staff who understand our customers, but also specialists who know how to store our cheeses and carve our charcuterie in the right way".

**Be the best**

First-rate produce and knowledgeable employees are vital too for the success of deli counters within food halls, as Bruce Langlands, director of food &



DE BEAUVOIR DELI: "ENVIRONMENT SETS THE TONE"

restaurants at Harrods highlights: "At Harrods, our goal is to showcase the best selections from around the world. In order to achieve this, provenance, innovation and quality are essential. We source diligently and continually in order to bring in the finest produce and newest discoveries. Having a team of shop counter colleagues with enviable and vast knowledge ensures customers are offered the best advice that both educates and assists in their choices." For businesses championing local provenance, the 'made on-site' message can carry great weight, as The Ludlow Food Centre's Kay Thomas outlines: "It can be difficult communicating that much of what we sell in the deli is actually freshly made just metres from where someone is standing. We emphasise the link in every way we can – a window into our kitchen and many points of sale. Also, while many visitors frequently purchase our artisan cheeses, breads and preserves, not everyone buys food-to-go from the delicatessen, so we encourage links between the departments to drive footfall to the deli."

**Create an ambience**

Décor is another element to consider, which Harry Davies of De Beauvoir Deli explains. "The environment is the first thing you experience and sets the tone for

everything else, but it's important to strike a balance between design and functionality. What's more, too much design starts to seem contrived, so I think it's best to let your look evolve." For Kacary, the overall appearance is likewise crucial: "People like to visit premises that have a sense of style and which gives them something



JOHN SHEPHERD: PARTRIDGES

different, surprising and exciting. Apart from our stock and great knowledgeable staff, the only other way of achieving this is to ensure that the fixtures and fittings are top notch." Similarly, John Shepherd of Partridges advises the following: "The shop environment as a whole has to uphold the values of the deli counter and create a certain

ambience. It is often the things you think you never notice like lighting, temperature and flooring materials that make the biggest impression."

**Be prepared**

Located next to a Glasgow train station, Billington's of Lenzie, winner of the prestigious Regional Scotland Award at The Farm Shop & Deli Show 2016, has seen earnings increase annually by 12% since launching in 2012. Owners Mark and Sue Billington share their thoughts on some of the main things to get right: "Stock rotation has a huge effect on margins, so it's essential to keep stock moving and avoid those best-before dates. Cash flow is similarly critical, especially to help you trade through the quieter months." Reiterating the importance of location and thoroughly researching the area beforehand, they offer a note of caution for anyone considering opening a new delicatessen. "Set-up costs can be very high as suppliers may not be keen on giving too much credit

“ Good delis need to be constantly nurtured, managed, organised, cleaned and lovingly tended ”



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initially. Also, be prepared to work long, unsociable hours and recognise the huge learning curve. Listen to your customers, stay proactive and be innovative." Kacary echoes these sentiments: "Keep things looking fresh, stay current and understand what's happening in the market, but be different and brand your business accordingly." However, during times of reduced cash flow, significant stock outlay may be required in advance for key times of the year, something which Kacary stresses: "You have to plan ahead. Think about Christmas stock in June and then budget to pay for it later in a quieter month like November when you might be cash poor. It is important to recognise and understand the spending patterns which will be unique to each deli. To assume that what you will sell in one month will be the same every month is probably one of the major reasons for a deli to fail."

**Consider diversifying**

For many delicatessens, profit margins on premium products can be woefully low, so an on-site café or restaurant is indispensable, accounting for the majority of revenue as well as helping to reduce food wastage. Nonetheless, while not every deli will have such facilities, the ability to provide ready meals can still add huge value. Hunters of Helmsley, located on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors, is a family deli in a market town voted Britain's best in the 2015 Great British High Street Awards. At least 70% of its range comes from Yorkshire and supporting local suppliers is a central part of owners Chris and Christine Garnett's philosophy. "We are retail only and do not have space for a café", the Garnetts explain. "We sell around 50,000 made-to-order sandwiches every year, which is essential to our business, using the freshest ingredients with most of the meat sourced from local butchers and cooked on the premises. We use high quality local bread rolls, provide gluten-free options, and do half sizes for children and smaller appetites. Our sandwiches are deep-filled and people travel long distances for them, and although not the cheapest in the town, they definitely offer value for money."

The growing trend for artisan tea or coffee represents a further

lucrative revenue stream, and for Earsham Street Deli owner Michelle Steele, this is a key part of her strategy. "It's really important, because it brings people in who then might notice other items we sell. Offering a decent coffee sets a precedent for the rest of what we do; we have many customers who come in for their daily fix and only have to ask for 'the usual' as we get to know our regulars' preferences." Hampers are another popular way of boosting sales, for spring and summer picnickers, holiday home welcome treats and luxury gifts. At Hunters of Helmsley, Christmas hampers fit in with the Garnetts' personalised service ethos. "We receive orders year after year, with bespoke hampers our most popular options. For example, people will say 'I want to spend £50 on a couple who love Italian food' and we will put something together accordingly. However, in the last few years, corporate hampers have declined as companies have cut back on their spending."

Other methods of bringing in punters and increasing revenue include holding events, promotions and tastings. Jeff Folkins of Dalling & Co., a deli and wine merchant in Kings Langley, sees these extra services as critical for survival. "We hold monthly themed wine tastings with food for £15-£30 a

head, have a monthly supper club, twice-weekly tapas nights, and host private parties and charity promotions. You have to provide something of interest, otherwise you're just another shop on the High Street. For us, there is a clear symbiosis between the deli and wine shop, as visitors can eat in and have a bottle of wine, which attracts customers and earns us extra revenue through a small corkage charge." For Bruce Langlands, education through tastings can reap rewards too: "The Harrods shopper is more selective than ever, which I believe comes from a growing interest in understanding where the food has come from plus the vibrant and flourishing food scene London has to offer. Educating and inspiring our patrons with regards to provenance, heritage and craftsmanship is imperative, and there is no better way of doing this than tasting and experiencing the food first-hand. This is why we host a number of tastings for our newest and finest products throughout the year, as well as masterclasses."

**Build relationships**

John Shepherd shares his thoughts on how to reach out to different age groups: "Small companies offer unique products and, through the medium of social media, help us sell them, particularly to our younger

clientele, who are keener to support these smaller brands and start-ups. Older consumers tend to be more traditional in their purchasing and need to have the high quality deli staples such as hams, pies, smoked salmon and regional cheeses." For Louisa Chapman-Andrews of Melrose and Morgan, an artisan grocery shop and kitchen in London, building a good relationship with local media, as well as maintaining a strong online presence, are indispensable for attracting customers: "Local newspapers and glossy magazines care about what you are doing and will be glad to take news about new stock or services, run imagery and support what you do. But it's equally important to think about the on-the-ground bloggers and tweeters and target them with specific products or happenings in your shop that you know might pique their interest." Mark Billington echoes these sentiments: "We are very big on social media. It's a great tool to build up clientele and keep them informed of upcoming events, promotions and new lines. We also have an online shop which is a useful secondary income, but needs to be constantly updated to be successful."

There are many challenges facing any business entering this sector, but establishing that there is a market within the local area is

always the first step. For Kelly and Cooper, Pistachio & Pickle is very much at the heart of their Islington community: "It's a social hub where individuals meet and become friends, trade stories and services, get fed and watered and support local and home-grown producers." Ultimately, there will be a steep learning curve, driven by customer demand, product knowledge and a long-term strategy with a clear USP. John Shepherd offers some final advice: "Good delis need to be constantly nurtured, managed, organised, cleaned and lovingly tended. However, do not attempt the project as a hobby or to get out of the rat race. Do it for your love of good food and drink and of sharing it with like-minded people."

**TOP 10 TIPS**

- Choose your location carefully and check out the competition
- Know your customers – who they are, what they like, how they change
- Choose a name and look that tell the public what you do
- Be relevant, seasonal and proactive
- Have knowledgeable, charismatic staff
- Keep tight stock control
- Have a reserve of cash for 'dead months'
- Provide homemade food in addition to other offerings
- Consider other revenue streams
- Maintain an online presence

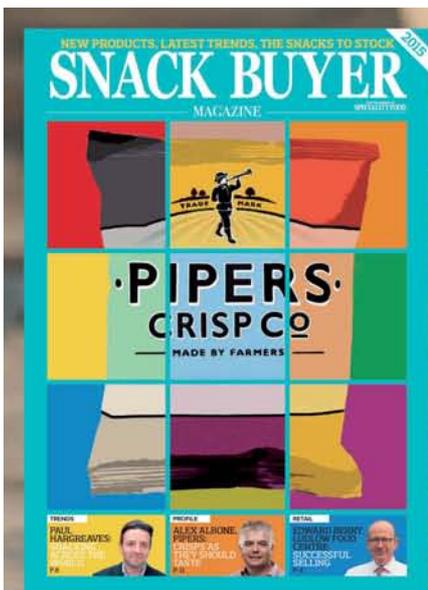
**TOP 5 PITFALLS**

- Reduced cash flow at certain times of the year
- Significant stock outlay required in advance for Christmas
- Competition from supermarkets advertising deli counters
- Long hours of working with few staff
- Customer expectations can be difficult to manage

“ Educating and inspiring our patrons with regards to provenance, heritage and craftsmanship is imperative, and there is no better way of doing this than tasting and experiencing the food first-hand ”



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# HOME BAKING

The consumer love of home baking is showing no signs of abating. Here, industry experts advise what to stock now

**B**aking at home has long been a popular pastime in Britain. From homemade afternoon tea and freshly baked bread for picnics to the office bake off, Britons have appreciate a sweet or savoury treat baked at home for generations. The baking at home market has changed in recent years to encompass healthier treats – ‘clean eating’ has taken over the bookshelves and kitchens of customers across the UK, making it well worth a look. Nearly every baking ingredient has a healthy alternative; dairy butter has coconut oil, white flour has rye flour, and refined sugar has a whole host of substitutes including agave and molasses.

As the home of speciality food, it's only natural for delis, food halls and farm shops to tap into this trend – to offer something the supermarkets

can't or won't. Flour from local, small-scale mills, free-range eggs from a nearby farm and the latest and greatest sugar substitute to hit the market will not only refresh your range but also bring in new, health-conscious customers, and in doing so boost both your reputation and your bottom line.



Marriage's, a popular millers in Chelmsford, Essex, has revelled in the growing popularity of artisanal flours and has created a range to suit. Hannah Marriage says, "Our comprehensive range now includes eighteen premium quality flours for home bakers, in 1kg and 1.5kg bags. There's something for everyone, whether you want to make homemade bread, cake, pastry, pasta and pizza. Our flour is produced

using a combination of traditional techniques we have trusted for generations and the best modern milling technology." This attention to detail and trend hasn't gone unnoticed: "The range has won 38 Great Taste Awards," Hannah says, "and includes organic, speciality and traditional stoneground flours milled on horizontal French Burr stones, as well as very high protein Canadian flours."

## FROM THE RETAILER...

**Abigail Bumstead, head of retail at Suffolk Food Hall tells Speciality Food what makes the store a destination for lovers of baking at home**

We sell lovely flours from a brand just up the road in Woodbridge called Pakenham Water Mill, and products from Maple Farm Kelsale – both very small, local producers. They do a lot of speciality flours such as spelt and rye which are very popular at the moment. We also stock Marriage's which offers a good, solid, all-round range of flours; they're based in Essex so are pretty nearby too. We sell Sugarvida which is much better for you than standard refined sugar, as well as molasses and agave syrup which are quite trendy. Gate Farm Eggs are one of our core products which we really champion – we sell masses of them, and sell them at just £1.50 for six large free-range eggs which is cheaper than the supermarkets.

We get all sorts of people coming in to buy from our home baking range, from our regulars who come to stock up their storecupboard to children wanting to buy our cake pop moulds.

People tend to bake more in the winter, as people find it comforting and are less worried about fitting into a bikini! Families seem to buy baking ingredients and decorations more for their children too, to keep them occupied while it's not so great outside. The range is very popular generally, but there's definitely an uplift in the colder months.

We tend to boost sales of the home baking department with merchandise rather than price promotions, and when the Great British Bake Off is on we tend to run a competition with our chefs in the restaurant – we create recipe cards and a display out for our customers.

Clean eating is a trend we're seeing a lot of at the moment; people are wanting to use things like coconut sugar and cashew nut butter in their baking as a replacement for conventional baking ingredients.

Marriage's has recently boosted its health credentials with the release of its Golden Wholegrain range, as Hannah explains. "Health is an important consumer trend – many people bake at home to be in control of the ingredients going into their cakes or bread. Our new Golden Wholegrain Bread flour and Plain flour have a sweeter, milder flavour and a lighter colour than traditional wholemeal flours.

"A store cupboard essential for health conscious home bakers, they offer an easy and tasty way to boost fibre and add wholegrains."

Seeded varieties have also seen an increase in sales as the consumer love of healthier foods. "There's also been more interest in ancient grains," Hannah says, "with some people finding that ancient grains are easier to digest than modern wheat."

## Great displays sell more

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Peter's Yard is extending their range with the launch of three new home baked crispbread bites to complement their original award-winning sourdough crispbread: Sea Salt, Five Seed and Cumin & Nigella Seed.

Wendy Wilson Bett, Co-Founder of Peter's Yard said "We always listen to our consumers and we regularly hear that baked snacks made with all-natural ingredients and those used for dipping are all growing at a phenomenal rate," when describing the new packs, designed by Design By Country.

Packaging supplier National Flexibles Sales and Marketing Director Mark Thompson said, "Peter's Yard crispbread bites range is incredible, and the stand-up pouch looks great on shelf to grab your attention. The only problem is I don't want to share them!"

For more information please contact James Walker at National Flexible:

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FROM THE DISTRIBUTOR...

**Paul Hargreaves, chief executive of Cotswold Fayre shares his view on the current home baking market – and shares a stocking tip or two along the way**

**WHAT HOME BAKING PRODUCTS DO YOU SUPPLY?**

At Cotswold Fayre we offer a wide selection of home baking products, ranging from baking mixes to decoration items, ingredients, flour, sugar and yeast.

**HAS THIS RANGE GROWN IN RECENT TIMES?**

Definitely, our range has grown significantly in recent years. A lot of this growth can be attributed to the increasingly popularity of British baking and cooking programmes. Most prominently, sales of baking kits and mixes have increased in recent years. The range of gluten-free baking and bread mixes from Delicious Alchemy have proved to be one of our most popular new products this year. These kits make baking more accessible to people. Not everyone has time to think about sourcing, measuring and mixing a whole heap of ingredients together, but they do have time to follow a few short set of instructions on the back of a packet.

**HAS IT CHANGED AT ALL? IF SO, HOW?**

On top of the increase in the number of novices taking up baking it is also

clear that those who bake regularly are spending more and more time on the activity. These individuals are also much happier to cook from scratch, which is driving an increase in sales of high quality ingredients including wheat and gluten-free flours.

**HAS THE INCREASE IN CONSUMER HEALTH CONSCIOUSNESS AFFECTED THE RANGE – ARE YOU SELLING MORE HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES TO CLASSIC INGREDIENTS THAN BEFORE?**

As with most food sectors, the growing consumer trend toward healthier alternatives has had an impact on home baking market. The great sugar debate is also driving a consumer hunt for sugar alternatives such as the natural sweetener from SugaVida. An area that is not necessarily considered healthy but has certainly changed is the demand for gluten free baking ingredients. With more consumers implementing a gluten free diet, baking products from brands like Mrs Crimbles and Glebe Farm Foods are reaping the benefits.

**DO YOU SELL MANY PACKET MIXES – ARE THEY POPULAR?**

Gluten-free packet mixes are selling well at the moment. It can be difficult for consumers to make a good homemade cake without using wheat flour. These mixes tend to be made by expert gluten-free bakers resulting in a much better final product.

**WHO BUYS YOUR HOME BAKING PRODUCTS?**

The demand for baking products has certainly increased amongst a younger generation. In fact, I would say the home baking market stretches from people aged 25+. This is in stark contrast to when I first opened Cotswold Fayre, when baking products tended to be popular amongst a much older generation.

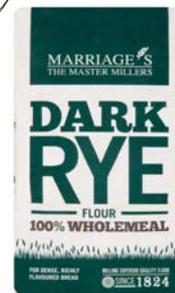
**DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS TO EXTEND YOUR HOME BAKING RANGE?**

We are always reviewing our ranges and continue to look for new and exciting products within the home baking category. Sowans, one of our new suppliers this year, produces a fantastic range of simple, quality ingredients that are perfect for home bakers. The brand's range of nuts, seeds and dried fruit are perfect for adding another dimension to recipes. In the near future I can certainly see sugar alternatives such as coconut sugar and speciality flours such as chickpea increasing in demand.

“ There’s also been more interest in ancient grains, with some people finding that ancient grains are easier to digest than modern wheat ”



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# THE HEAT IS ON

John Bensalhia finds out why chilli-based products are hot property at farm shops and delicatessen

Chilli and chilli products are booming in popularity. "Chillies and chilli spice are staple ingredients in dishes from a variety of cultures, and so there is a really wide market for spicy foods all across the globe," says Emma Macdonald, founder of The Bay Tree. "From Mexico and the Caribbean to Korea and Goa – chilli is taking the world by storm." The chilli phenomenon is proving to be especially



popular in British farm shops and delicatessen, as more people look to add a little heat to their food. "Demand for chilli-based products is still high and it's steadily increasing as more people accept it into their diets," explains Marcus Bradford, operations director of Gog Magog Hills Farm Shop. "It's now a very common flavouring for everything from deep, rich chilli con carnis to eye-popping Thai salads. The range of products available is also constantly changing, and this seems to drive demand."

Sanjay Sood-Smith, co-founder of Tuk In, admits to being obsessed with the spice. "Throughout my childhood, I was



fortunate to have authentic and flavourful curries readily provided by my family: my mum even sent me to school with chicken tikka sandwiches! My business partner Tom shares my obsession with curry and chilli flavours. The truth is, spicy, chilli-based food has been popular in Britain for centuries. It was just over 200 years ago that an Indian migrant opened Britain's first curry house." Mr Sood-Smith agrees that chilli adds a real depth of flavour to any meal. "People are becoming more adventurous with food and chilli is fast becoming a must-have ingredient in every meal." An added advantage of chilli-based products is that they can come in varying levels of spiciness to cater for different consumer tastes. "Where some people like their food eye-wateringly hot, some prefer a flavour that will gently tingle their tastebuds!"

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## Flavour appeal

Stacey Galfskiy of The Chilliicious Farm agrees that the key element of the chilli's appeal is not so much heat as flavour. "We've got a bad reputation in the UK for our food habits, but it's an unfair stereotype. Being so multicultural, we love a wide range of foods, including the humble chilli."

Chilli not only adds a depth of flavour, it brings a sense of fun. Steve Waters, director of the South Devon Chilli Farm says that customers always expect chilli to be a fun element of food: "We see this in the way that our products are available for sampling and tasting; the customers both enjoy and challenge themselves with the different flavours and the increasing heat levels of the products on offer. Eating chillies causes the body to produce endorphins which can give you the 'feel good factor,' and once you are used to eating them, chilli becomes somewhat addictive. Overall, chilli is great in that it adds another side to every meal."

Farm shops and delicatessen are also educating their customers in the variety of chillies and chilli-based products available. "People only think about red or green chillies, but there are so many more chilli varieties out there," explains Marcus Bradford. "Habaneros, Jalapenos and Naga Jolokias are all very individual and are suited to different dishes. We want to educate our customers so that they can enjoy everything from mild to strong and spicy. Chilli gives a dish a kick and it makes people smile. A dinner party is never dull when there's chilli involved because a properly spiced dish gets conversation going."

Educating customers in the different types of chilli is also an important part of the South Devon Chilli Farm's service: "There are literally thousands of varieties of chilli," explains Steve Waters. "Most people tend to know varieties from the five main species, but there are many other species of chilli grown in the wild. However, you won't see them in this country as they grow in very specific conditions."

"What we like to get over to our customers is that chillies are not just about heat. We like to encourage people to think about the right flavours for them: there are more diverse flavours of chilli out there than people realise. In fact, one of our favourite chilli varieties, the cherry bomb, has made a really popular sauce with its fruity flavours and just a dash of heat. People are surprised by the range of flavours that you can get: really strong flavours can be used in sauces, chocolate and preserves.

There are so many interesting flavours available, a wider palette that we encourage our customers to experience, both in the shop and in the café."

## Greater range

The wider palette is also seen in the greater range of chilli-based products available. One example, as Frankie Fox, co-founder of The Foraging Fox, says, is its newly-launched Hot Beetroot Ketchup, which is a chilli-infused incarnation of The Foraging Fox Original Beetroot Ketchup. "It has a complex and sophisticated flavour, aimed to gently raise an eyebrow rather than blow your socks off. Created using a combination of chilli-infused beetroot with the earthy warmth of horseradish, Hot Beetroot Ketchup delivers a pleasing, lip-tingling heat that fills your whole mouth. We are already seeing enormous success with our Hot Beetroot Ketchup: it received the award for Best New Condiment at this year's FoodBev World Innovation Awards. The Foraging Fox Hot Beetroot Ketchup is unique because it provides consumers with a healthier alternative to some chilli-based condiments. Our beetroot ketchups are all natural, allergen free, and lower in sugar, which is really important to many health-conscious consumers."

Another new product is The Bay Tree's Chilli & Ginger dressing, which is described by Emma Macdonald as a "real zinger. It has a fresh and flavourful warmth. Sure to bring some spice to everyday salads, it is also perfect for pouring, dipping and marinating and ideal for adding a tasty twist to a stir fry. Condiments are a great way to easily add some pizzazz to a meal and our Roquito Chilli Hot Sauce has been phenomenally successful. We have also just launched a Jerk Sauce: a delicious combination of the aromatic flavours of red chilli, ginger, allspice, garlic and the fruity sweetness of honey and apricot."

Sanjay Sood-Smith discusses the Tuk In's brand new naan-based range: "Our curry-in-a-naan is a high quality, mess-free and stress-free snacking solution – created

using 100% natural ingredients and a generous helping of chilli! Our initial trio of products gradually turn up the heat with their specially-blended spice recipes. For cautious consumers, the mild Korma is a rich and creamy sauce combined with the distinctive sweetness of coconut. The medium Tikka recipe blends creamy tomato with added bite from chilli and paprika. The hot Jalfrezi is a spicy mix of onions, tomato, peppers, cardamom, coriander, chilli and garlic. Tuk In is essentially authentic curry, mixed with succulent pilau rice and sealed in soft naan bread. Created using all natural ingredients, including British halal chicken breast, Tuk In delivers a fresh tasting and nutritious meal that is low in sugar, saturated fat and a good source of protein. The unique snacking format means that curry lovers can indulge their passion anytime, anywhere."

## Jam hot

An enduring chilli-based product is chilli jam. As a simple but tasty addition to other foods such as sandwiches or salads, it's an unbeatable choice. Marcus Bradford says that chilli jam is one of the most popular products of its kind at Gog Magog Hills Farm Shop: "We sell a variety of chilli-based products as well as some which contain chilli as a flavouring. Some are old and some are newer to the food scene but it seems that our most popular product is one which has stood the test of time and that's Tricklement's Fresh Chilli Jam. It's so simple and it's a very tasty addition to a great bacon sandwich."

Chilli jam is one of the three most popular sellers at the South Devon Chilli Farm Shop, and versatility is key to its success. "We have always done well with chilli jam, which is a consistently big seller," says Steve Waters. "Chilli jam is a versatile product that lends itself to all sorts of uses such as meats and we also use chilli jam for some of our meals in the café."

Another major seller has been hotter chilli sauces, which is in line with the trends for hotter, more powerful chillies. "The sauces are



# SUPERB SAUCES

Retailers of Mr Singh's chilli sauces and cooking pastes are offered remarkable levels of support

Mr Singh's range of chilli sauces and cooking pastes is now offering independent outlets a quite remarkable level of retailer support. The five-strong range, which comprises the Original Hot Punjabi Chilli Sauce, BBQ Chilli Sauce, Hottest Chilli Sauce, Punjabi Pesto and Himalaya Pesto, is sold in Ocado, Selfridges and Booths, and managing director Kuldip Singh Sahota is especially keen to work closely with his independent stockists.

"When we launched, we went from zero to about 450 retailers in seven months and it was too much, too soon," he says. "When you have that many retailers and only three people, you can't necessarily support everyone. Now we are working really closely with our retailers, rather than just adding new ones for the sake of it. As a contemporary ethnic brand, we represent modern ethnic British food, but we have heritage, too." Mr Singh's is a family business which started in an East London shed. Kuldip's father, Kenyan-born 'Popa' Singh, has developed the range significantly since creating his first recipe, and continues to use all-natural ingredients. "All our products are gluten-free, apart from our first two sauces, the Original Sauce and the BBQ Chilli Sauce which have malt vinegar in them," Kuldip says.

"Mr Singh's Hottest Chilli Sauce uses two of the hottest chillies in the world and we believe that with over one million Scovilles of heat, it is the hottest, all-natural, commercially available chilli sauce in the country. Despite the heat, it tastes nice, though, because of the use of dates and beetroot. The RRP is kept affordable at £3.50, whereas a lot of super-hot sauces start at five or six pounds."



The support which retailers now receive "is some of the strongest to be found from a tiny brand such as our own," Kuldip says. "Our last online video was viewed nearly half a million times and attracted 1,000 comments. We are also running a campaign in which we create bespoke four-week campaigns for individual stores. Here, we do a week of promotions to build up and do the sampling, and then for three weeks after that, we support the retailer online and leave videos display units in their store. These units require no maintenance and use an entertaining, silent visual sequence to connect customers with the brand. Recipe cards and posters are used too, and in the fourth week, we create a recipe using ingredients on sale in the selected shop. This is posted online and targeted at specific customers in that area."

This year, Mr Singh aims to launch campaigns in 50 independent stores and to double that number in 2017. This month sees the company launching a crowd funding campaign to raise money and give something back to its supporters, while August will see the first annual Mr Singh Summer Barbecue, "a fun day out for retailers and families," Kuldip says.

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



“Most people tend to know varieties from the five main species, but there are many other species of chilli grown in the wild”



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### TUK IN CURRY IN A NAAN

Chilli adds flavour to this innovative range of grab-and-go snacks which will appeal to lovers of curry.  
[tukinfoods.com](http://tukinfoods.com)



### BAD BOY CHILLI MASH

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### SOUTH DEVON CHILLI FARM BHUT JOLOKIA MASH

Bhut Jolokia mash is a ready-to-go paste, giving you Bhut Jolokia heat without the pain of handling these incredibly hot chillies.  
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hotter than ever before and have a great flavour to them," says Mr Waters. "There are always people looking for the hottest chillies they can get and we have lots of fans of our new super-hot sauces from the ghost chilli, also known as the bhut jolokia or naga chilli to our new scorpion sauce. The ghost sauce contains chillies measured at over 1 million on the Scoville Heat Scale and the new scorpion sauce contains Scorpion chillies, recorded at 1.2 million on the Scoville scale."

Customer demand has also resulted in chilli chocolate performing well at the South Devon Chilli Farm Shop, especially its Single Origin 70% dark chilli chocolate from Madagascar and 38% milk chilli chocolate from Costa Rica. "Chilli chocolate has taken a while to perfect, as it needs the right blend of chocolate and chilli to make a flavour that is popular with customers, and the chilli chocolate products that we sell definitely have that right balance."

Chocolate has also been a big hit at the Chilliicious Farm. Recently, this has resulted in some notable coverage in the press, as Stacey Galfskiy explains: "lately our most popular product has been our Buckfast Chilli Chocolate: both the bars and the Easter egg version. We had some unexpected (and huge) coverage in *The Sun* at the end of February. A friend sent me a photo of the front cover of *The Sun* with us on at 6.30am. By 7.30am we'd sold out of all our stock. By the end of the day we had to shut the website down for further egg orders. We had to bring on two extra staff to help make all the eggs and by Easter we'd handmade over 500 chilli Easter eggs! A wonderful achievement considering that we only launched the eggs in January 2016 at the SECC trade fair." In addition to the Buckfast chilli chocolate, Chilliicious also does an Irn Bru & Bacon chilli chocolate, a Maple Syrup & Bacon chilli chocolate, and there are also plans to make a Hooch chilli chocolate and a Chilli Chocolate Special Brew.

Chilli chocolate is one of those products which can surprise people with a delicious and unique combination of tastes. "Chilli ice cream is another good example," says Steve Waters. "Again, we pitch it to make the right balance which ensures that the chilli doesn't overpower the ice cream. Other notable products include chilli apple juice, chilli spreads and chilli marmalade. We have also co-operated with a company in Totnes for chilli pale ale."



However, at Gog Magog Hills Farm Shop, Marcus Bradford says that unusual chilli products seem to sell the least. "We've sold chilli flavoured chocolate ginger beer and ice cream and, although they have their die-hard fans, the novelty seems to wear off for others. Something a bit different which does sell well is the Chilli Venison Chorizo from Great Glen. It's a favourite with customers and a two star Great Taste Award Winner."

### Did you know?

Educating customers about the virtues of chilli also allows some lesser known facts to come to light. For example, did you know that chillies are used to scare elephants away from crops in Africa and Asia? Or that dairy products (like cheese, yoghurt or milk) are the best remedies for cooling your mouth? Even the differences in preparing chilli in a meal differ worldwide, as Steve Waters discusses: "An interesting point to make is that in the UK, chilli tends to be used for the heat aspect of a meal (for example, in a curry). It's used to provide colour and heat and is added to the meal afterwards. Whereas in other parts of the world, other ingredients are added to the chilli. It's the other way round, and complements the flavour."

An important fact about chillies is that they have healthy and beneficial properties. Steve Waters says that chillies contain more vitamin C per gram than oranges, while Emma Macdonald says that chilli has actually been proven to boost the metabolism: "Due to a compound called capsaicin, chilli increases heat and calories burned in your body."

There are some interesting combinations worth trying out too,

as Marcus Bradford explains: "Chilli and egg work really well together. I recommend stirring a spoonful of Gran Luchito Smoked Chilli Paste into scrambled eggs. The smokiness adds an extra layer of flavour. In my opinion this is one of the best chilli products on the market. I also love to dip homemade chips into Gran Luchito Smoked Chilli Mayo."

There is much potential in chilli, and with further education about this sector, the way in which these products are regarded could change in the future. "There is still a lot to be done about getting some of those flavours into products that can then be used in staple meals in the UK," says Steve Waters. "I believe that appreciation of chilli will become that bit more refined in the future. Just like coffee, people will also have a greater appreciation of the different varieties out there."

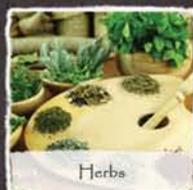
Chilli continues to build on its burgeoning reputation, and it's one that looks set to grow even further in the future. "Consumer tastes are definitely becoming more accustomed to spicier foods," says Frankie Fox. "Especially during summertime, consumers love the taste of chilli to add to their barbeque foods."

Chillies' healthy properties also continue to strike a chord with buyers. Emma Macdonald says: "There is a relentless demand for foods that can do us some extra good, so if people can combine a health benefit with this favourite flavour, the popularity of chilli-based food will continue to surge."

"The future is bright," concludes Marcus Bradford. "I can only see the popularity increasing. Chilli has great health benefits and when used in the right dish, chilli is definitely one of my favourite flavours."



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# MEET THE PRODUCER

"Great tasting – yes. Available for everyone – yes. Slightly eccentric – absolutely"

Tony Goodman knew exactly how he wanted the Ten Acre brand to evolve since spotting a gap in the market for free-from snacks with a difference just over two years ago. "First and foremost, Ten Acre is about taste," says Mr Goodman, who is CEO of Yumsh Snacks Ltd, the creators of Ten Acre. "If a product doesn't taste good, then no one will want to buy it. We set out to create hand-cooked crisps and popcorn that really tantalise the taste buds and leave people wanting more. We were also looking to create a brand of snacks that everyone could enjoy – regardless of their lifestyle or health requirements. And right at the core, there had to be a sense of fun and enjoyment. Ten Acre brings all these strands together – it is what makes us unique."

The brand has grown quickly since its launch at Food Expo in 2014 – largely due to its broad appeal – yet it has remained true to its *raison d'être*. Ten Acre can today be found in Fortnum & Mason, Selfridges and leading fine food shops and delis across the UK, Europe and beyond; celebrated hotels such as The Ritz and selected Conde Nast Johansens properties and even at Wimbledon. With Ten Acre, Yumsh Snacks has created a brand which perfectly marries premium quality, great taste and free-from innovation. "The misconception that free-from means bland, tasteless and expensive is long gone. The category is positively basking in popularity thanks to the great strides being made in its innovation. Ten Acre is certainly at the forefront, with premium quality crisps and popcorn that deliver on taste and texture with a point of difference, too," says Mr Goodman.

The brand is also set to spread its wings in an altogether different direction with a foray into the world of literacy. Ten Acre warmly embodies storytelling, a subject which is close to the heart of Mr Goodman, whose love of literacy was inspired as a youngster by classics such as Arthur Ransome's



Swallows and Amazons. "Storytelling is an important thread that weaves its way through the brand, from our quirky flavour names to the fictional Ten Acre village we have created online," he says. "There is an eccentric collection of characters who live in Ten Acre, all with stories to tell. We have already created a book of all of these tales – and we are working on our very own literacy project, to encourage everyone to share their wonderful stories and adventures."

That 'whimsical' village feel is replicated on Ten Acre's trade stands, where visitors, and the intrigued, are often invited into 'Ten Acre' to discover more. It has helped the

brand become recognisable both in the UK and in the 28 other countries where it is also now on sale. While there may be an element of fun trickling through the brand, Yumsh Snacks Ltd is serious about Ten Acre's list of credentials which it believes are unmatched. All Ten Acre snacks are Free From 'Plus' – that is great-tasting plus gluten, dairy, MSG and GMO-free, vegan, vegetarian, halal and kosher-certified. In order to adhere to strict regulations, Yumsh Snacks Ltd produces all of its products at a specially-created manufacturing facility in the UK. British potatoes are used to make the crisps and all of the packaging is British too.

The Ten Acre range features 17 varieties of hand-cooked crisps and 'hand-picked' popcorn (from the popcorn trees that grow in Ten Acre). Flavours include the Great Taste Award-winning Wasabi, Sweet & Salty popcorn; Fennel & Lemon, Sour Cream & Chive, Lime & Sea Salt, and the new Cappuccino, and Strawberry & Cream popcorn. Varieties of hand-cooked crisps include the multi award winning Sweet & Sour, Chicken Soup, Bombay Spice, Hickory BBQ, Salt & Vinegar, Ready Salted and Sweet Chilli and the latest additions Pastrami and Cracked Black Pepper.

"A great deal of research goes into deciding which flavours we add to our collection. For example, we liaised closely with the coffee industry to develop our new Cappuccino popcorn and we work extremely hard to get it right. Taste and texture is key. There are no brands out there like us. No other snack brand in Europe can say that their range includes vegan Cheese & Onion, or vegan Pastrami crisps – or indeed its own village. We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved so far, and we very much look forward to seeing what the future brings for Ten Acre, the brand and the village.

"Well, I did say we were slightly eccentric!" laughs Mr Goodman.



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# SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE

Condiments are essentials that will be regular purchases for many customers. Make sure you that you are stocking the best



SCOTTISH CONDIMENTS: FAVOURED BY SIMON YEARSLEY AT THE SCOTTISH DELI

Nothing affects your bottom line like regular sales. It's all very well carrying lines that are fantastic and bestow a clear point of difference on your shelves but if those shelves are where these lines stay for weeks on end, you may wonder if they are little more than window dressing. What you need are items that people buy regularly, preferably each time they come in. This is the beauty of stocking condiments. Everyone wants ketchups, vinegars and mustards, and these days you can offer them their favourite sort of condiment as produced by an artisan maker.

At The Scottish Deli, Simon Yearsley stocks "mostly Scottish-produced condiments." Key suppliers include Young's Preserves, "who make a stunning range of chutneys and the awesome Young's Sweet

Piccalilli, Niall McNab who produces a divine lemon curd and seasonal jams and ketchups, including the lovely HP (Highland Perthshire)." Stocked too are Trotter's Independent Condiments, Sarah Gray's Handmade Preserve, Summer Harvest dressings and Allan's chilli jams and sauces."

A strong showing of condiments is essential, according to Simon. "Customers expect a good local deli to stock a range of condiments that they won't find in supermarkets," he says. Other essentials are Trotter's Mostarda – based on an Italian recipe and made in Fife, and Summer Harvest salad dressings, with flavours such as Bramble & Juniper and Apple & Walnut being particular favourites. Flavoured vinegars seem very popular and we are trialling The Little Herb Farm fruit and herb vinegars. Trotter's makes a Mojito Jelly that is stored in the fridge and works really well with cold meats and cheese, and we think that this speaks to a trend for mixing things up a bit on the traditional chutney front. The introduction of alcohol really adds an extra dimension."

Popular now, Simon says, are "fruit vinegars and balsamics, and the interest in all things chilli shows no sign of abating. Customers are always looking for products that are free from artificial preservatives. Helpfully, producers are labelling their products gluten/dairy/fat-free as appropriate, and this enables us to sell these alongside other free-from products."



A fixture on the shelves of many farm shops and delis is Stokes Ketchup, which owes its popularity, says managing director Rick Sheepshanks, "to its uniqueness in the market. Firstly, we make it ourselves. Secondly, we use the best quality tomatoes, and lots of them. Thirdly, we have a top secret blend of spices we don't share with anyone! The tomatoes in our ketchup aren't the cheapest, but they are – to our way of thinking – simply the best in terms of taste, consistency and overall quality. And not only that, but we use literally tonnes of them. For every 100g of ketchup, we actually use 200g of tomatoes. That means that our cooking time is quite considerable, but we think it's worth it.

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"We make 75 different products, but our ketchups are definitely some of the best sellers. Not just our original recipe, but also our spicy Chilli Ketchup and our divine Bloody Mary Ketchup. We are also about to launch a new variant – Curry Ketchup. The taste-testing research we've done indicates that this will be equally popular. After the ketchups, Stokes Real Mayonnaise is our next fastest-seller. It has much less salt than most of the other mayonnaises on the market, and we use British free-range whole eggs and a very fine Koroneiki Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Sales of our mayonnaise are closely followed by those of Stokes Brown Sauce. This contains a higher content of superior ingredients than most of our competitors – including a rich date puree – and although national sales of brown sauce are declining, we are happy to say our product is bucking the trend. Our Tartare Sauce and Horseradish Sauce are also all showing exciting growth, too."

**Small batches**

Providing something a little different for independent retailers is The Sauce Shop, whose owners, Pam and James Digva, say the business "produces hot, sweet and savoury table sauces. Our range includes classic condiments as well as more contemporary recipes, from a classic Tomato Ketchup to South Carolina BBQ Sauce and Sriracha." The sauces, Pam says, are all made in small batches and contain no thickeners or stabilisers, "not even corn starch, as we think this gives them a brighter and cleaner flavour. We try not to add any water to our recipes and only use good quality ingredients, always avoiding powders and purees."

Condiments are stocking essentials, Pam says, but getting that point of difference is as important as ever. "Ambient sauce is a very saturated category," she says, "so our aim was to create an eye-catching range that stands out amongst the busy artwork, silly names and wordy labels that are so common. Our sauces are colourful and our branding is stripped back – they really brighten up the shelves. Our flavours are also a little different, so they create interest – especially around BBQ season. For example,

we are one of the only independent sauce producers making a Sriracha chilli sauce, which makes a nice alternative to the big brand versions available.

"Unlike many other sauce brands, you won't find our products in the supermarkets, so we offer something a little different that independent farm shops and delis can be proud to stock. Our sauces work well with a lot of dishes and foods that delis and farm shops stock, particularly meats and cheese, so they often become add-on purchases. We also offer a great intro pack of mixed cases, which is low risk for a small independent retailer. We take a lot of time promoting our customers, no matter how big or small they are. Best selling sauces for the Sauce Shop are the Buffalo Hot Sauce (based on a classic American wing sauce but with real butter added) and our Tomato Ketchup. Our Mushroom Ketchup is also a very good seller and goes amazingly well with steak. We are certainly experiencing increased demand for our hot sauces, but the more traditional recipes are still in demand as well."

Along with its jams and chutneys, Rosebud Preserves produces a Mint Jelly, an English Country Mustard and a Traditional Piccalilli. Owner Elspeth Bilot says that while "many products found on supermarket shelves contain high levels of sugar, fats and salt, as well as various additives and preservatives, there is a growing awareness amongst smaller producers that products should be made as naturally as possible, using the best of local ingredients." Unlike mass-produced condiments, Elspeth says, "all of ours are made from generous quantities of ingredients, using the simplest of recipes and as naturally as possible. We use fruit, unrefined sugar and lemon juice in our jams and jellies and all our savoury



products are prepared by hand using fresh locally-sourced ingredients when we can. The noticeable difference between our products and those found in supermarkets, is undoubtedly their natural qualities of set, consistency and taste."

**Best sellers**



Another notable presence in farm shops and delis is Tricklements, whose marketing director, Becky Vale, says that a range of condiments "provides retailers with the perfect opportunity to upsell from their deli counters. A condiment can make or break a meal, so it's imperative for retailers to offer a brand which delivers provenance, authenticity, trustworthiness and consumer loyalty." Tricklements, Becky says, "handmakes a range of 11 mustards, eight sauces, eight jellies and four ketchups. The first condiment Tricklements made, and the first wholegrain mustard available in the UK, was Original Wiltshire Mustard and the most recent addition to the range is Fruity Damson Jelly." Among these, Becky says, "the most traditional prove the most popular, so our best-sellers are Strong Horseradish & Cream for beef, Traditional Mint Sauce for lamb, Strong English Mustard for sausages and pies and, of course, Proper Tomato Ketchup for chips."

As well as being voted best supplier for five years on the trot, she adds, "Tricklements is the one-stop shop for the best quality condiments and offers over 45 years experience as category leader. With over 60 products in the range, 170 foodie awards and promotions which are guaranteed to engage the consumer, Tricklements is ideally placed to service the needs of the specialist retailer. From the definitive Strong Horseradish & Cream to the ever-popular Proper Tomato Ketchup, our range of condiments is honest, simple and delicious. Upholding our tradition of British Fair Trade, Tricklements products are made with the best quality, local and regional ingredients, such as Bramley apples from Kent, horseradish from East Anglia, and tomatoes from the Isle of Wight."



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PAM AND JAMES DIGVA OF THE SAUCE SHOP

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It's all too easy to wrap a cheese in cling film, shove some fresh veg in a brown paper bag and post a blank box of stock to a customer, but how you label and package your products holds more value today than it ever has before. Not only are customers after a thorough explanation of the product they've just spent their hard-earned money on – as we know, provenance and story hold a strong sway right now – but they also want to feel like their purchase is a treat. Spending an extra minute or so (if that) attractively packaging an item will improve the customer's experience of your service to no end, and go a long way in promoting repeat custom.

Not to mention the practical benefits of correctly packaging food items for transport. If they're fragile, it's important that they are wrapped sufficiently enough to avoid damage, and if chilled it's imperative that they keep their temperature and freshness to ensure that they arrive at their destination in the best possible condition. Below, we speak to Icertech to find out more about the services they provide. We also speak to Deliwreaps and discover the value of bespoke wrapping.

When it comes to labelling, the general consensus is the more comprehensive the information included the better, but that doesn't mean that your labels should be chock full of detail to the extent that the package becomes unattractive. A handwritten label will draw the eye, adding an artisan touch befitting the products in question. Rhuaridh Buchanan, owner of Buchanans explains: "I am a big fan of hand-written labels as they give a personal, hand-picked feel – but only if they are done well. Individual chalk boards can look great but there is nothing worse than a badly written sign for making your counter look a bit messy. We use a pre-printed format to ensure consistency and clarity. It also means we can put the same label on a customer's cheese to take home."

Rhuaridh believes that brevity is key when labelling his cheeses, in order to promote conversation between staff members and customers. "When it comes to descriptions, my preference is to not put these on the labels as it tends to take up too much space and you may end up with a counter full of signs blocking the view of the cheese. Our counter is always staffed and so this information can instead be given in a more interactive manner as we taste with the customer."



**Justin Tunstall,**  
retail consultant  
and former  
Cheesemonger of  
the Year, shares  
his thoughts on  
the importance of  
thorough labelling

Entirely unscientific research indicates that fewer than half of Britain's independent cheese sellers label the cheese that they cut for customers. In my view this represents a massive missed opportunity.

Long before I got into the business, I used to buy cheese for



# WRAP IT UP

Spending a little longer packaging your products can pay dividends. We find out how from the people who know best

the family. I'd spend time making my choices, asking about where the cheese came from, the milk, rennet and then sampling as the final clincher. So far, so good. But all too often the smiling and obliging cheesemonger morphed into a truculent, sulking teenager when I asked for the names of the cheeses to be put on the wrapper. Some would just slowly repeat the names as they handed them over to me; others would scrawl an illegible name across the paper – clearly having missed their vocation as prescribing medics. I took my purchases home and tried to bluff my way through the cheeseboard at the end of a dinner party: "Um, yes, I think that's the Beenleigh Blue – or maybe it's the Devon – you don't have a problem with cow's milk, do you?"

When I opened a shop, I resolved to do things differently. I invested in a thermal labelling machine and programmed it to give some useful information for each of the cheeses:

- Name
- Area of Origin
- Milk – which animal?
- Organic?
- Pasteurisation?
- Suitability for vegetarian diet
- Inclusion of any allergens
- Major awards won
- Use by date (completed if requested by customer)
- Weight
- Cost per 100gms
- Price
- Contact details for the shop

One might think that this information would rival War and Peace for succinct communication, but by using the initial letters P, U, V and O, we saved a lot of label space. Customers were able to identify their purchases with confidence and remind themselves why they were

attracted to the cheeses in the first place.

- The benefits to my business were immediate, as customers:
- Knew the name of the cheese for a repeat purchase
- Developed knowledge about our range and were able to recommend us and our cheeses

- Had contact details for the shop to pass on
- Could keep the labels from cheeses that they wished to recall

This helped develop customer loyalty and speeded up subsequent purchases.

If you have a small range of cheeses you can probably get away

without investing in sophisticated labelling scales. Some producers will supply 'deli stickers'; Barber's 1833, Blacksticks Blue, Ford Farm's Cave Aged Cheddar and the Hawes Wensleydale often arrived from the wholesaler with a handy sheaf of labels. To comprehensively cover your range, get hold of some blank labels from an office supplies shop and pre-print descriptive labels for each of your cheeses. Then close up the cheese wrap with a flourish and seal the bargain with your bespoke label!



**Dawn Price of**  
inkREADible  
explains why  
labelling is more  
than just a sales tool

**What makes a consumer choose a food product before they have even tasted it?**

Of course the answer to this is relatively simple, apart from having it recommended and knowing the brand, consumers buy based on the label.

**So, how do you know if the design and finishing of your label is correct for your product, and will it stand out from the crowd?**

The design, material used and finish of your labels is a very thought provoking subject and can be an extremely emotive process, as we well know!

For over 30 years, InkREADible Labels has specialised in the supply of self-adhesive labels and swing tags for artisan food and drink producers and retailers.

We understand that labels can be a very emotive issue for our customers as an attractive label can determine the sales success

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of the products they care deeply about. We have years of experience working from the initial concept through to the finished product and guide our customers on the best way to achieve their objectives, although this doesn't necessarily mean we will simply recreate their design.

We believe the best way forward is to work in partnership with our customers, who sometimes want something that, in our opinion, is just not possible, feasible or even cost effective so together we find what works best and is eye catching as well as affordable.

We are an independent business like the majority of our customers, which means we understand the needs and challenges independent businesses face – we are flexible, we react quickly, and we work to a budget but will also try to save

money for our customers when we can. We can also produce small quantities of labels when market testing or launching new products.

Label designs tend to follow trends. For example, is the 'rustic' or full colour and highly gloss look in vogue? Your labels and packaging may look fantastic but the most important factor is that your product must look different to other brands. Sometimes doing the opposite of others can pay dividends. 'Don't be afraid' is the motto and our capacity to produce small quantities of labels for testing reassures our customers that their budget has been used effectively.

So don't let your labels become a stressful issue, talk to us and we can help guide you every step of the way to ensure you have a product that speaks for itself through its label.

## 5 MINUTES WITH...

Alex Pawley of Icertech

### WHAT PACKAGING SOLUTIONS DO YOU OFFER?

Icertech can offer a range of chilled packaging solutions including insulated boxes, long lasting ice packs, insulated envelopes, and retail-ready carry bags.

### WHY SHOULD FINE FOOD RETAILERS/PRODUCERS OPT FOR ICERTECH'S PRODUCTS?

Icertech appreciate the importance of high quality products, and we understand that our customers want their products to arrive with their own customers both fresh and in a condition that they can be proud of; Icertech products can help you to deliver these values.

### WHAT PRODUCTS ARE CATERED FOR – ARE THERE SUITABLE PACKAGING SOLUTIONS FOR CHEESES, CHARCUTERIE, FRESH FRUIT/ VEG AND ICED PRODUCTS?

Yes, Icertech's products are suitable for anything that needs to be kept chilled for a certain period of time. We can offer advice to customers on an individual basis.

### TELL ME ABOUT YOUR NEW BRANDING – HOW DOES THIS STRENGTHEN YOUR OFFERING TO INDEPENDENT RETAILERS?

We hope our new branding gives the company a friendly yet professional look, representing who we are as a team. The new website makes it much easier for smaller, independent retailers to order smaller volumes as and when is convenient for them.

### Jonathan Howitt of Deliwraps speaks to Speciality Food about the power of bespoke

#### What does Deliwraps do?

For the last 30 years we have been manufacturing printed greaseproof, waxed paper and polythene coated papers for use in a food environment. We specialise in manufacturing printed (and plain) papers that are required to be in direct contact with food. Our products are available as sheets, rolls or bags. We work to BRC standards and all our food wrapping papers are bought from renewable sources, are biodegradable and most are compostable.

#### What options do you offer to retailers?

We manufacture to customers own requirements so if there is a specific

sheet sizes or roll width that is needed we can do it. Having bought two new six colour printing presses recently we can offer a wide range of print styles from a simple one colour random repeat logo to a full colour process print.

#### Why should retailers consider a bespoke wrap for their foods?

'Branding' is defined as "the act of giving a company a particular design or symbol in order to advertise its products and services." However, branding is a valuable business tool that is too often not appreciated for its worth! Most large multi-national companies have departments and staff dedicated to marketing and branding their products, so it is not surprising, then, that smaller businesses may think that branding is

only for those companies with large marketing budgets. Branding should not be dismissed as an unaffordable luxury since creating and managing a brand can cost as little or as much as you want it to!

Paper in particular is a natural, versatile and environmentally responsible packaging medium, offering a traditional and "wholesome" appearance. Combining different waxes with different base papers can create packaging products which can be "engineered" to protect against the fats, oils and moisture present in most deli-type products. Also, different base papers, when waxed, can produce interesting semi-transparent or opaque effects. Paper is the ideal substrate for print and a simple one colour repeat design can make even simple packaging stand out from plain un-branded packaging. Printed waxed paper packaging, Deliwraps, does not require a large budget, and can be made in small or large quantities and carry as much or as little information as required. Customers will find it helpful to see a visual representation of what the brand they are purchasing means, and will quickly start to recognise a product by its own unique brand image.



## Plastic Packaging Solutions

If you're sourcing packaging to contain your product or a solution to a food packaging process requirement, we have plenty of plastic packaging available from stock. Whether you need boxes or bottles, caps or containers, scoops or measures - all ours are manufactured in food approved plastic, available for immediate delivery. With 75 years' experience, environmental production credentials and exceptional customer service, Measom Freer has the packaging solution that's just right.



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# Last Words

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## Earsham Street Deli

Owner: Michelle Steele Opened: March 2007

### HOW'S BUSINESS?

Good! We've moved into larger premises last January after seriously outgrowing our original little shop. We were lucky enough to find a shop just a couple of doors down which gives us four times the space but allows us to keep the name Earsham Street Deli. We've been increasing turnover each year since we started, but since moving it's increased dramatically.

### DESCRIBE YOUR DELI

We're often described now as an 'emporium' which is a word I love because it encompasses our traditional charm as well as the vast array of products that we sell.

### WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS?

Everyone! Our customers range from people working in the town who visit us daily for takeaway coffee and lunch, to 'ladies who lunch', to families who take real care in the provenance of their food, to the elderly who visit us because we take the time to go through what they need and don't mind that they only want small amounts of something.

### WHAT DO YOU SPECIALISE IN?

We buy from over 60 suppliers, so whilst we have a fantastic cheese and olive selection, it's hard to choose one particular thing that we 'specialise' in other than provenance, quality and service. We champion the smaller, artisan producers that we are so lucky to be surrounded by in our local area, but won't rule out a brilliant product if it is produced slightly further away and tastes fantastic.

### HOW IMPORTANT IS YOUR LOCATION?

Incredibly important. We're located in a small market town on the Suffolk/Norfolk border, and are surrounded by other outstanding independent shops and businesses.

### WHAT SELLS ESPECIALLY WELL?

The Seggiano and Fine Cheese Company ranges are great for their consistent quality and repeat sales. Our olives are from the lovely folks at Silver & Green whose products and service is outstanding. Lauden Chocolates and Monty Bojangles truffles are also great sellers.



### WHICH LOCAL FOODS DO YOU SELL?

St Jude's and Baron Bigod cheeses, which are both made in the town, are some of our most popular products, as well the raw butter made by Fen Farm Dairy in town. We're also huge fans of the Marsh Pig charcuterie range; handmade salamis and cured meats made about 10 miles away with the best cuts of free-range pork. Then there's the award-winning Pump Street Bakery Chocolate bars, and the sea salted chocolate-coated caramels from B Chocolates, which are made using local honey. Amongst the other local favourites are the Choose Spice Goan, Rendang and Sri Lankan curry pastes made in nearby Woodbridge, and the entire range of dressings, oils and curds from Scarlett and Mustard are a must-stock.

### WHICH FOODS ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT?

The foods I am most passionate about are the ones that aren't trying to be too clever; simple and straight-up, where the flavours do the talking!

### THREE THINGS TO GET RIGHT

The first is product selection. The range must be right and inspire customers to want to try and taste, and perhaps try something

new, and displayed in a way that entices. The second is service. Just because somebody visits you once, doesn't mean they will again if their experience isn't good enough. Personal, knowledgeable and caring service is the best tool an independent has over the larger companies. And thirdly is work ethic: it might be the best job in the world, but the working day doesn't finish when the door closes at 5.30!

### IF YOU HAD TO START OVER AGAIN, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

I think learn to be less of a control freak and delegate more quickly. When we first opened, I was the only one there all day, every day, except for a Saturday girl, which meant for years every single task was completed by me alone. As we've grown, taking a step back to concentrate on other elements has been very difficult to adjust to, but now we have four members of staff it's just impossible to cope without them! Having a great team around me allows me to keep ahead of the competition in sourcing new products, keep up with the ever-growing social media side of the things, and also keep a fresh, objective outlook on the business.

### WHAT ARE THE REWARDS OF RUNNING A DELI?

The rewards are the people you get to know along the way, and as much as it's a bit of a cliché, the little community of other businesses and customers who become such a huge part of your life. We hear all sorts of things every day; people confide in us or come in feeling stressed and then after a chat and a coffee they leave feeling better!



Richard Fox  
"Feel the love"

When it comes to looking for inspiration, motivation and the general 'feel-the-love' camaraderie of folk with a common passion, the faceless impersonality of a sprawling exhibition centre may not strike you as your go-to destination. However, over three days in April, I found just that in the fresh air-less halls of the NEC for the 2016 Farm Shop & Deli Show. Rarely do I celebrate the concept of 'I can't believe a year has gone by', but as I greet vaguely familiar faces like old friends, embrace colleagues turned buddies, and start salivating at the prospect of sampling hitherto unknown treats, I feel a surge of excited anticipation of what lies ahead.

As a neutral at this show – I'm not here to sell, buy, or am even required to explore the aisles, over and above my daily return schlep to and from the feature to which I'm assigned to compete and present – I always enjoy the prospect of observing the masses: their wares, idiosyncrasies and general to-ing and fro-ing.

I bound from stand to stand like an exuberant Labrador pup, enthusing and lapping up the fresh, innovative and tasty offerings being aired, often for the first time – all in search of the next reggae reggae sauce story, do-it-yourself charcuterie, or impossible taste sensation. But there feels something more to this show for me, over and above being a working foodie in the midst of a gourmet extravaganza; something more intangible, earthy and honest than the familiar trade show routine of business-to-business commerce. For a start, I'm struck by the number of people who have radically changed their lives simply because of a personal passion for flavour.

Maybe there's an element of rose-tinted specs at play here from a man with nothing to lose. But without a word of a lie, I'm writing this on my long journey home to begin, what I hope will be, a much longer and more exciting journey to launch my very own little craft food business. Who would have thought a few days at a trade fair could inspire an old timer like me? Certainly not me.

See you next year.

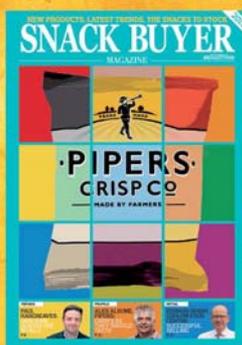
## SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

Inside the next issue of Speciality Food:

- Essential Products: Winter 2016
- Early Christmas Planning
- International Cheeses
- Seafood
- Nantwich Show Preview

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## SNACK BUYER MAGAZINE



PUBLISHED WITH  
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**Published by**  
Aceville Publications Ltd, 21-23 Phoenix  
Court, Hawkins Road, Colchester,  
Essex, CO2 8JY

**Next issue available** July/August 2016

**Subscriptions**  
01206 505965  
subscriptions@aceville.co.uk

The BAR rate UK £29.25.  
Overseas £40.00  
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# SPECIALITY BITES

Paul Hargreaves of Cotswold Fayre



“Many of the tastes and trends of Millennials play into our hands”

I have talked in a previous article about employing Millennials (approx. 20–35 year olds) and how it is essential for employers to understand how to maximise the potential of this powerful and growing group within the workplace. This month I want to look at Millennials again, but this time looking at them as consumers. From the older generations' perspective, we ignore their sometimes "strange" behaviour at our peril, as this group will become more and more powerful consumers as their incomes increase and they become older.

So, in preparation, last week I took an online test entitled, 'How Millennial are you?'. To my surprise I was almost classified as a Millennial, being only three percentage points below the necessary score. (I'm actually a Baby Boomer, by the way.) In fact, if I had been able to say "yes" to having a tattoo or body piercing, I would have made it over the line by a margin! So if you see me sporting a tongue piercing

at the next food show, you will know why!

Seriously, we should understand what and how Millennials eat if we are to ensure our food businesses are attractive propositions to this large group of consumers. First of all, Millennials love unusual flavour profiles, strange fusions and new things. They are thrill seekers and love telling their friends about new food experiences. Millennials also judge food by its cover. Trendy, eco-friendly packaging will entice them to buy. Cans, jars and bottles are out! Food is an adventure, and Millennials seek out different, ethnic and artisan foods more than either of the two previous generations.

They are also far more likely to want to know more about "behind the scenes" of how products are made, and which ingredients are used. Socially responsible companies making food with ethically-sourced ingredients is exactly what they are looking for. They shun food from large corporates and love companies who are donating profits to social enterprises. They are, for example, 70% less likely to buy bottled water than the previous generation, due to the environmental impact. 30% eat organic food only and 80% want to know more about how food is grown before they purchase. Whole Foods and Ben & Jerry's are examples of the kind of companies they love to love.

How they eat has also changed markedly from the previous generations. The days of three square meals a day are long gone. Millennials eat out most at lunch time, and tend to eat four smaller meals a day at non-traditional times. Combining foods traditionally served at breakfast, lunch and dinner has led to terms such as "linner", "brinner" and "slunch". The three course meal is also a vestige of the past, with Millennials preferring a more 'tapas-style' meal with lots of small plates of food to try. 55% prefer communal tables at restaurants, something that would probably annoy the older generation! They even prefer to go grocery shopping in groups – this is a very strange phenomenon, even to me.

Many of the tastes of Millennials play into our hands. So concentrate on marketing your products to this generation and you may be surprised by the results.

## Best Practice

Russ Haddow, head of fresh food at Suffolk Food Hall, takes us behind the butchery counter

**My role in the butchery covers a whole range of tasks, ironically most of which do not involve the physical act of butchery!** I spend a lot of time working in the background, analysing figures and patterns of sales by species, monitoring wastage levels and looking at avenues for regular wastage offenders; this has the potential to undo all the good work of the team if not managed closely. The other main element of my role is to work with and develop the team members, and learn from them just as much – being more hands off means it is essential to spend time with individuals so we all understand what we are trying to achieve and why.

**A successful counter begins quite a long way before a customer can see it!** It is about executing the same principles throughout the process. For us that means being very clear in what we are looking for from our suppliers, and we are fortunate that Charlie understands and helps us a great deal to do this. We try to encourage taking a step back, walking around the counter and viewing our work, as it's amazing how much different it can look from the other side of the glass. The other key is being loud and proud about the hard work that goes into the rearing of the animals, and being able to say which farm and field they came from.

**There is a certain level of charm to a string of sausages that are slightly different lengths and thickness.** It also showcases that they are handmade, right here, and customers sometimes comment on who has made the sausages this week! The burgers are hand-pressed here too, it gives a



much nicer finish than a machine press and also adds a further layer of quality checking before the product reaches the counter. Production is important to us, it is traditional and is a bit of a spectacle – kids (and adults too) love to see a whole length of sausages, or burgers and meatballs being pressed or rolled.

**Seasonality is really important to the team, hence the cold and wet April causing so many problems!** The season, and the weather, affects the whole process and mindset of the team. You alter your cutting habits to match the weather, as the cuts of meat are versatile in their use but you need to decide which ways to use them. The team, luckily, are able to adapt to the changes quickly, be it increased handmade production or creating different roasting joints, but this changes all of the processes that went before. The best times of year for us are BBQ season and then the return of game, which is a big deal here.

**The BIGONBBQ campaign was started last year to give us a real focus through the summer months, with something that was true to our core values.** Going mad for barbecue food is a very British thing to do, and what better than local, high quality, handmade products to grace a barbecue come rain or shine. The idea behind the site-wide push was to get the whole team together and excited

about a common purpose. It is more than just butchery, though, there is fish, fresh bread, cheese, salads, gin and cider, which means everybody can have input and enjoy barbecue season.

**One of the biggest mistakes that we have made was to sacrifice some of our core values, which resulted in increased sales of a slightly lower quality product, and ultimately damaged our reputation.** This took a long time to undo and restore faith in the quality and authenticity of the product we offer, and we even disappointed some customers by being unable to give them what they were looking for until it reached the quality we were happy with. I think the biggest thing we took from this was to know that it's better to wait for the product to be of the right quality and explain why, rather than take the short-sighted sale.

**I have learned a huge amount in my time working as part of the butchery, from specific skills in the butchery and knowledge to help with that side of things, to the difficulties of having an idea and actually implementing it – it's perhaps not as easy as it seems!** I think one of the most important things I have found is patience. Sometimes, no matter how hard it is not to, you have to give an idea a chance or let a change have the time to be proved successful or not – which is really difficult if it goes poorly to begin with. It is the same if things are quite going right, as it's very easy to have a knee jerk reaction and change everything when you might not necessarily be doing much wrong at all.

“There is a certain level of charm to a string of sausages that are slightly different lengths and thickness. It also showcases that they are handmade, right here, and customers sometimes comment on who has made the sausages this week!”

## COTSWOLD FAYRE\*

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