

SPECIALITY FOOD

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Happy New Year! I hope our first issue of 2017 finds you well, and rejuvenated by the busy season just passed.

2016 was a struggle for many; the sugar tax divided opinion and wreaked havoc for some while proving profitable for others, Brexit had everyone's arms upraised – in celebration and in strife – and Trump's appointment as President of the United States had many sobbing into their paperwork as they pondered the effect this would have on their lives both in and out of the workplace.

But this new year brings an opportunity to turn a new leaf, to learn from lessons and to celebrate triumphs. Does your business have any resolutions for the upcoming year? *Speciality Food's* is to continue to evolve and grow – in order to help you do the same, too.

So, this issue we've got a number of features primed and ready to help you make the most of the next 12 months. First up is a look back at the most noteworthy moments in food and drink in 2016, and a prediction for how they'll play out in the coming year (p10). Next we explore refurbishment and expansion, sharing what to do and how to do it in order to make your business the best it can be (p28). Finally, we welcome the first installment of Trend Watch, an exploration of

“
This new year brings an opportunity to turn a new leaf, to learn from lessons and to celebrate triumphs. Does your business have any resolutions for the upcoming year?”

the trends set to make waves in the months to come (p32).

This forward-thinking issue is bolstered by sector-specific features, too, from chocolate (p18) and territorial cheeses (p26) to breakfast foods (p20) and the best of Scotland's food and drink (p33).

Plus, we introduce diary-worthy events Top Drawer (p17) and Scotland's Speciality Food Show (p37). Onwards and upwards!

Holly

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NEWS IN BRIEF

FORTNUM & MASON CELEBRATES RECORD SALES

The 309-year-old fine food retailer has experienced record sales following an influx of online shoppers seeking out its British foods, as well as experiencing an increase in popularity of its luxury hampers.

The brand, which until 2012 derived 40 per cent of sales from domestic shoppers, notes that 60 per cent of its customers now hail from the UK, and has posted a 12 per cent rise in sales to £98.7m and profits of £6.2m for the year to 10th July.

Kate Hobhouse, chairman said, “Knowing that our recent success impacts so positively on so many UK producers is one of the great pleasures of chairing the business. Our UK suppliers have always been the backbone of our ranges, and we continually nurture new talent wherever it is found.”

CONSUMER APPETITE FOR BISCUITS CRUMBLES

Annual sales of 'everyday' biscuits have declined by £25.7m as Britons opt for healthier snack bars instead.

According to retail analyst Kantar Worldwide, the UK biscuit market is worth £2.4bn, which is down 0.3 per cent on last year. Sales in the 'everyday' category fell 7.1 per cent and now worth about £300m.

However, the past year has seen the premium category grow, Fraser McKevitt, retail insight chief told BBC 5 Live.

The healthy category has grown 1.3 per cent to £516m in the past 12 months.

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Ethics, convenience and wellness: What's to come in 2017

Each year in the fine food and drink industry is characterised by the product trends that dominate headlines and social media timelines. For independent retailers, the act of keeping in touch with consumer habits is essential for maintaining a prosperous business.

2017 is set to see a rise in popularity of 'ancient' products and traditions, Polynesian food and relaxation-inducing drinks like chamomile tea. As well as food fashions, consumer culture is also an area to keep tabs on, with a more self-expressive attitude to food via photography and styling becoming more widespread, while paying closer attention to food label details is appearing a more common shopping trait.

TRADITIONAL

"Consumers seek comfort from modernised updates of age-old formulations, flavours and formats," predicts Mintel.

Consumers are on the look-out for products that are recognisable rather than revolutionary. Mintel states that this trust in the familiar emphasises the opportunity for manufacturers to look to the past as a dependable source of inspiration, citing 'ancient' products like grains and also ancient recipes, practices and traditions as areas to tap into.

SNAP HAPPY

In *The Waitrose Food and Drink Report 2016* it outlined that in one month alone one in five Britons – nearly nine million adults – has posted a photograph of their food on social media or sent an image to a friend. One third of 18 to 24-year-olds have posted a picture of their food in the past month – a figure that falls to one in 14 among the over-55s.

It appears that the rise of social media has changed our relationship with cooking, as almost 44 per cent of us make more effort with our

cooking if we think a photograph of our creations may be posted online. Waitrose also reports that sales of its patterned bowls are up 12 per cent this year, as cooks are looking for Instagram-friendly ways to style their meals at home.

HEALTH AND ETHICS

Waitrose's report states that we're taking more time over our shopping, as 80 per cent of customers find it important to consider how and where their food is sourced from, while 20 per cent actively check animal welfare standards. Nearly a third of us study the nutritional information on the product we're looking to buy. According to Defra statistics, shoppers are estimated to have taken home six billion fewer single-use carrier bags in 2016, which is an 85 per cent drop in usage since the charge was introduced in 2015.

Mintel also reports that inequality is not solely a political or philanthropic issue, and it will resonate with the food and drink industry in the coming year. Many lower-income consumers want to

improve their diets, but the cost and access to healthy food and drink is often a problem. More campaigns and innovations are expected that will make it easier for these consumers to fulfil their desires of a healthier lifestyle, including apps to help shoppers make use of cheaper ingredients and value-priced boxes of wonky vegetables.

Jenny Zeglar, global food and drink analyst at Mintel said, "This year's trends are grounded in current consumer demands for healthy, convenient and trustworthy food and drink. Across the world, manufacturers and retailers have opportunities to provide more people with food and drink that is recognisable, saves time and contains servings of beneficial fruits, vegetables and other plants."

TIME LIMITATION

Busy lifestyles and time constraints are propelling a need for quick-fix solutions that are still fresh, nutritious and customisable, states Mintel.

We've already seen 'biohacking' food and drink, which offers complete nutrition in convenient formats. In 2017, the time spent on – or saved by – a food or drink product will become a clear selling point, inspiring more products to directly communicate how long they will

take to receive, prepare or consume.

"The time investments required for products and meals will become as influential as nutrition or ingredient claims," adds Mintel. Research by Waitrose shows that sales of sushi shot up by 20 per cent in 2016, which could be influenced by the fact that 25 per cent of workers in the UK take less than 20 minutes for their lunch each day.

Waitrose also reports that gourmet meal kits are currently having a moment. Perfect for time-strapped foodies, they include pre-measured, prepped ingredients and a recipe.

RECUPERATION

"Evening is tapped as a new occasion for functional food and drink formulations," reports Mintel. The hectic pace of modern life is creating a market that helps people calm down before bedtime, sleep better and restore the body while they rest.

Products can leverage the reputation of the tea category and use chamomile, lavender and other herbs as a way to achieve a sense of calm before bedtime, while chocolate could be positioned as a way to wind down after a stressful day.

Kate Willacy of Pukka said, "When we feel tired or drained, we reach for coffee to give ourselves an energy boost. But tea can be a better choice when we're stressed thanks to its content of a natural substance called L-theanine, which is virtually unique to the tea plant.

It has been found to have a relaxing effect on the mind, reduce anxiety and help with focus. It's thought to do this by increasing alpha waves in the brain."

UP NEXT: FOOD

Waitrose predicts that Hawaiian poke (pronounced POH-keh, it's a raw fish salad marinated with lime, soy and sesame and served with rice) looks likely to be the next on-trend dish. Another food fashion making its way here from the US is infusing flavours of vegetables like carrot, beetroot, tomato and sweet potato into yoghurt for a savoury accompaniment to various recipes. A shift to selecting lighter and fresher options is also becoming a prevalent trend, with many consumers opting for vegetable purées instead of heavier sauces.

UP NEXT: DRINK

We've seen coconut, birch and cactus waters gather lots of press the past year, but it's cold-pressed watermelon water which is predicted to be flying off the shelves next, bolstered by celebrity endorsement.

When it comes to alcoholic beverages, Waitrose noted a phenomenal rise in the interest in Japanese whisky in 2016, as well as craft beers in cans, premium-quality bourbon and premium non-alcoholic beverages such as Seedlip (distilled alcohol-free spirits made with botanicals).

The popularity of gin doesn't seem to be going anywhere any time soon, either, with sales in Waitrose up 45 per cent in 2016 compared to 2015. The supermarket puts this surge of sales down to its versatile nature and the fact that personalisation goes a long way with consumers. For example, botanical mixers such as Fevertree are also up 17 per cent. Anna Jones, category manager says, "Increasingly, people are want to find flavours of their own volition, rather than be told what to drink."

“ In 2017, the time spent on – or saved by – a food or drink product will become a clear selling point, inspiring more products to directly communicate how long they will take to receive, prepare or consume ”

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“Happy New Year!”

Welcome to a New Year as yet untarnished and still full of optimism. Magazine editors everywhere will have got together and commissioned a raft of pieces about the future for January. What are the trends for 2017? Will there be some new ‘must-cook’ foods? Will there be developments so earth-shattering that the face of retail is changed beyond all recognition? This time last year, all the speculation was about Brexit. No one knew how it would end up and we still don’t, although it is fair to say that the result managed to be both unexpected and inconclusive.

At the beginning of the old year, who would have predicted that 2016 would be remembered for a big supermarket’s small war with a food manufacturer over Marmite? Two sides groping for some kind of publicity advantage.

Another year-defining development was the rise and rise of gluten, or rather the lack of it. Suddenly gluten-free was the thing to be. A number of products that had never ever contained gluten started to emblazon ‘Gluten-Free’ on their labels. Last year saw the launch of a gluten-free dog food – presumably Towser had been munching his way through a wheat field when he saw the error of his ways and went gluten-free. Perhaps this hound could try eating meat?

2016 was once billed as the year of the spiraliser, but mercifully courgette spaghetti didn’t catch on – too wet and flabby.

Yet another assault on our culinary heartland came from a different and surprising direction. According to the research boffins, the public is falling out of love with tinned food. Tinned soup has borne the brunt of this development and

is down 8%. Heinz tinned tomato soup may be a lurid colour, it may not taste of tomato, it may have a dodgy chemical smell to it, but surely it is a part of everyone’s gastronomic journey? Then there is the tinned sponge pudding, whose sales slid down by 30%. Solid, unyielding, chewy sponge with a dripping crown of golden syrup, a week’s worth of calories in a single hit.

What’s going on when we no longer defend our comfort foods? Goodness knows what will happen to that tinned steak and kidney pie beloved of besid dwellers everywhere. A shallow tin with deep brown, gloopy, gravy and some brave chunks of meat swimming through it. Meanwhile the crust is detached and cooked separately, ending up golden and flaky.

Another trend that greets the New Year is eating insects, worms and bugs. All of which makes perfect sense if you live somewhere where there is very little to eat. Last autumn saw something of a push for insects. How about cricket bolognese? Sadly, this is not dinner served at a Test Match but rather one of many suggestions that we should all be munching on insects. Perhaps start with the cricket flour energy bar?

There have always been strange gimmicks on the food aisles – five or six years ago one of the bigger department stores sold a natty line in chocolate-covered scorpions.

What makes the world of food and drink so rewarding is the unpredictability of the public; it would take a very foolhardy scribe to predicate what lies in wait for us in 2017, and even if the hamburger marches on through our menus and a gluten-free range is a must-have, nobody knows the when, where and why of it all.

Make mine a tinned syrup sponge pudding!

OPINION: Tackling Fake Farm Brands

The rise of clever advertising being undertaken by food businesses to link their products to farms is hard to miss, says Michael Mack, managing agent of FARMA.

Recent figures from Mintel show that between October 2015 and August 2016 there was a 4.9 per cent rise in the numbers of people who try to buy British food when they can. In the same timeframe, 5.1 per cent more consumers were willing to pay more for British food. These figures could go some way in highlighting why supermarkets label lines using false farm names or terms such as ‘farmers’ market bananas’.

In response to this, FARMA has been looking at how it can support the independent farm retailer to compete with the big retail giants to connect with their customers.

The first new initiative formed by the association is the launch of a new certification scheme for ‘Real Farmers’ Markets’. Over the past year, FARMA members have been working together to create a certification scheme that enables customers to have genuine trust that when they visit a real farmers’ market.

The second step FARMA has taken is to launch a Primary Authority with Norfolk Trading Standards. By working with Trading Standards, FARMA members will be able to explore how branding legislation is interpreted and implemented. The partnership will also enable FARMA to play a greater role in the consultation on labelling and branding issues.

Retailers connecting their products to a farm and farmer

enables the business to trade on the value of being a farmer; trust, responsibility, hard working and from the earth. We must therefore ensure that independent farm retailers have the tools and support around them to compete with these businesses.

Real Farmers’ Market certification has been designed to make the process more accessible for markets to get involved while also ensuring the important elements of a farmers’ market are protected. Primary Authorities have long been used by supermarkets to ensure that all shops get consistent advice for tackling legislation, reducing the cost over all to the businesses. We felt it was important that farm retailers also had the security of constant legislation. To find out more email mike@farma.org.uk.

UK Food Industry Argues Access to Single Market is ‘Vital’

The largest coalition of food producers in the UK’s history has come together to call for tariff-free access to the single market and continued access to its workforce in order for food and farming to prosper post-Brexit.

A letter to the prime minister organised by the UK’s farming unions has pledged support for a positive vision for the sector in the aftermath of the activation of Article 50. They have also highlighted issues such as food security, safety and hygiene, stewardship of the countryside and affordable risk as factors that ministers need to pay keen attention to.

Food production is the UK’s largest manufacturing sector, and is bigger than both the automotive

and aerospace industries combined. The letter emphasises the point that a Brexit agreement that notes the pivotal role the UK food chain plays will demonstrate how Brexit can be beneficial for the UK economy as a whole. The letter makes clear that Britain’s food should be at the centre of negotiations.

Meurig Raymond, NFU president said, “Brexit creates an

enormous opportunity for farming, food production and for Britain. But to deliver this new future, we must secure the best possible access to the single market and continued access to a competent and reliable workforce. Getting this right will set the foundations for a successful new British agricultural policy.

“Agriculture is a litmus-test for the government’s Brexit negotiations. As the sector most heavily impacted by the referendum outcome, if the government can make British farming a success post-Brexit, then it will be the clearest indication that the country can succeed outside Europe.”

“For our sector, maintaining tariff-free access to the EU single market is a vital priority. It is where 75 per cent of our food exports go, so all our farming and food businesses wish to achieve this outcome”

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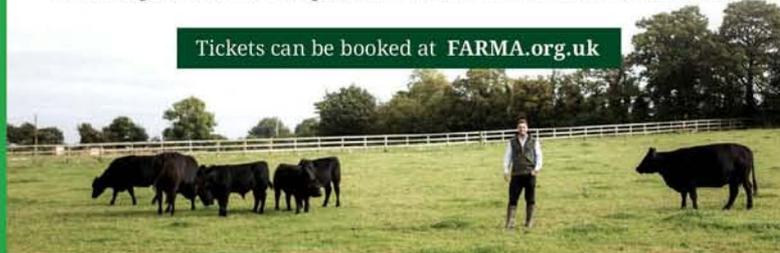
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JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES



“Reasons to be cheerful”

As I write this half way through November 2016, the very thought of the past year causes a sharp intake of breath. The Brexit uncertainty, the American election, declining sales and a fainting pound scarcely bring a smile to the face unless you happen to be looking out of the windows of the Kremlin, I have heard. Then what about 2017? Article 50? President Trump? Our staff?

I mention our staff because when the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, put forward the notion that businesses would have to register staff members who have come from overseas, her statement caused severe palpitations let alone a sharp intake of breath. I believe that this idea has thankfully now been withdrawn.

However, it encouraged us at Partridges to analyse the nature of our own workforce and their origins. The result of this analysis is that 70% of people currently working for us were born overseas and 30% were born in the UK.

To be honest, our existing staff have not really raised concerns as to what will happen to their future in this country following Brexit, apart from in the immediate aftermath of the result. In fact, the matter has not even been mentioned recently as everyone seems to be getting on with life despite the uncertainty.

From our management perspective, it is difficult to know how shops like Partridges could survive without the huge contribution of those from overseas or their predecessors going back 44 years. For about half that time we have had a

French wine manager, a French delivery driver, several Italian chefs, managers and shop assistants, a Spanish security officer and a deputy manager, a Cypriot cheese specialist and a customer service supervisor from the Caribbean, and numerous waiters and waitresses, shop assistants and cashiers from elsewhere.

Most of the ingredients we regard as British were also born overseas. For example: apples, pears, turnips, cucumbers and leeks were brought in by the Romans. Kippers arrived from Denmark in the 9th century. Potatoes, horseradish, broccoli and rhubarb are all immigrants, too. Some of our favourite brands are not as British as we might think, either: Marmite was invented by a German scientist, Schweppes by a German watchmaker and Angostura Bitters by a German doctor who later became a Swiss national. Justerini and Brooks (J & B) was launched by an Italian, and gin and tonic flourished thanks to Indian Tonic Water and India.

It is hard to see how this will change for us all in a post-pesto world. The present food culture of Britain, the numbers of people employed in the food industry and the exuberance of the start up community will lead to further growth of speciality food shops, I believe. We may not know what will happen in the immediate future, but we probably know what will not happen. The 38% of the electorate that voted to leave Europe would not vote to leave their favourite foods and wines or the people who are providing them.

Biofach Announces Key Event Highlights

Nuremberg-based trade fair for organic food Biofach, has revealed a host of different themes for this year's event.

Taking place from 15th to 18th February, the fair provides the industry with a platform to learn more about the on-goings of the organic food sector and product development within the market. Exhibitors and an expected 48,000 visitors can access four differently themed areas, including News & Trends, Experience & Discover, Know-How & Education and Presentations.

The industry will also hold a congress at the event to discuss the key theme of 'diversity and responsibility for our one world'.

Danila Brunner, executive director of Biofach said, "With over 2,500 exhibitors and more than 48,000 trade visitors, we present the whole of the organic market every day, including its speciality food and drink segment. Any buyer looking for something special, innovative



and unique should definitely visit the Novelty Stand and the Young Innovative Companies pavilion.

"The Catering, Olive Oil, Wine and Vegan World Experiences, plus the newcomers, the innovations and the awards are sure to be magnets and attract large numbers of visitors, just like the top-quality

and technically strong congress programme, which will be based on the focal theme of diversity and responsibility. Another highlight in 2017 will be the country of the year. The German organic industry will be presented at the world-leading trade fair under the banner 'Germany – organic food creates a future'."

British Food Exports to Non-EU Countries see Strong Growth

UK food and non-alcoholic drink exports rose 13.7 per cent in the third quarter of 2016, with export to non-EU markets growing at twice the rate of exports to EU markets, according to figures published by the Food and Drink Federation.

The overall value of branded food and drink exports grew to £3.4bn, up 12.1 per cent against the same period in 2015. The year-to-date figures show a 10.1 per cent rise with total exports reaching £10.1bn during the first three quarters of 2016.

However, trade to EU countries still accounts for two thirds of

the total, which is led by Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain.

The three export markets which saw the greatest value growth in the year-to-date were Spain, up £158m, China, up £124m and Germany, up £60m.

The top three product categories were chocolate, salmon and cheese, with exports of wheat experiencing the largest value rise, up £147.4m when compared with 2015.

Ian Wright, director general of FDF said, "It is very pleasing to see non-EU exports performing beyond expectations, with UK firms taking advantage of increased competitiveness following the

currency changes since the summer.

"As the UK leaves the European Union a growth in exports is hugely important to our sector. We hope that with the determination of businesses, and the assistance of the Government's International Action Plan for Food and Drink, we can open more channels and provide support to new and existing food and drink exporters as they seek new markets overseas."

George Eustice, food minister said, "Whether it's Scottish salmon or Wensleydale cheese, the global appetite for the British brand is showing no sign of slowing. These latest figures are welcome news for our food and drink businesses."



Defra last year announced a target of increasing manufactured food exports by a third to £6bn by 2020. It plans for a 75 per cent increase in food exports to come from non-EU countries.

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SMEs Keeping Calm About Brexit

AXA Business Insurance's research into small businesses in the wake of the Brexit result reveals a calm mood prevails, while many express reservations about growth in 2017.

According to the survey of 500 micro-businesses conducted in October 2016, there is little sign of panic amongst small business owners, as 53 per cent explain that they foresee no impact at all, and 14 per cent expect to do better as a result.

The unrest of previous months has not proved too detrimental to profits either, as 44 per cent have seen no change in profitability since January – 35 per cent said their profits are actually up. Falling profits have been reported by 21 per cent of businesses for the year-to-date.

The survey has found a fall in growth expectations for 2017

though, with only 42 per cent of small businesses expect to grow, compared to 55 per cent last year.

Hiring plans have also been impacted, with just 10 per cent of businesses asked stating that they will take on new employees next year. Those wishing to invest in business assets are also down 23 per cent from 2013.

While the government has announced an extra £400bn of funding through the British Business Bank, the research suggests a lack of interest for taking on finance. 28 per cent of small businesses expressed they will seek finance in 2017, but for most they will be looking to overdrafts or loans from friends and family rather than investment for growth. Just 4 per cent said that they will seek finance through government-backed schemes.

Darrell Sansom, managing director of AXA Business Insurance

said, "It is highly encouraging to see how coolly small businesses are responding to the uncertainty at the macroeconomic level. We have found no sense of pending disaster or panic, but they are putting the brakes on their plans for future growth.

"We've found time and again that small businesses are taking personal loans, credit cards and overdrafts as their main source of finance, rather than turning to the schemes designed for them. The money pledged for small businesses in the Autumn Statement has to be welcomed, but if they don't receive some reassurance about the economy in the longer term, they won't want to over-commit themselves by taking this finance on."



AXA also predicts that specialist food and drink shops will benefit from a £2.3bn boost over the festive period. Customers voted small shops as the most enjoyable place to do their shopping during Christmas, after fairs and markets. Only 23 per cent said they preferred shopping in larger stores.

RICHARD FOX



"Smooth talking"

It strikes me that after the frenzied consumer activity that the festive season gifts to the specialty food business in the form of stocking-filling, condiment-crazy shopping days, the January tightening of belts must be an unwelcome jolt back to reality for an industry not geared to the big-sale retail opportunity offered to the heavyweights of the high street. However, this metaphorical reference makes me think it has a very literal meaning as a real business boosting opportunity. Practically everyone and their dog are looking to shed a few of those Christmas pounds at this time of year. And where there is guilt there is opportunity – just ask the Catholic Church. Welcome to the health-giving, liquid hotbed of specialty foods: the smoothie.

The truth is, many of these little bottles of apparent goodness are laden with more than the daily recommended intake of sugar, let alone the flavour enhancers and preservatives. And given that these packed beverages are so ubiquitous, this is not the territory for the specialty food retailer. The opportunity that I refer to is in the wonderful world of giving the customer the tools and ingredients to create their own.

The great news is the homemade, super detoxing, pound-busting juice or smoothie recipe can and should read like a who's who of the exotic, nutrient-fuelled new kids on the block of specialty foods. From Peruvian chia seeds to Caribbean coconut oil and magnesium-packed pumpkin seeds to Madagascar vanilla

extract, never mind the organic whey protein, flaxseed and almond milk, there's an A to Z of speciality superfoods to replace the pre-season preserves, confits and chutneys.

When it comes to picking the bulk-giving fruit and veg for your smoothie, the normal food combining rules applied to the traditional meal plate go out of the window when blitzed and blended to a single homogenised beverage. I doubt even Heston himself could conjure up a tasty plate combining spinach, cacao powder and blueberries. Yet somehow, when blended together with coconut water, turmeric, black pepper and nuts, they transform into some delicious elixir of life. I know! I didn't believe it myself until my juice guru buddy made it for me. Of course, a little care and attention is required in judging relative quantities, but the simple culinary mantra 'you can add but you can't take away' will stand you in good stead for any less likely combo.

When combining vegetables, matching the colour green is failsafe. Avocados, frozen spinach blocks, coriander, kiwis, kale, limes and the like are guaranteed to look appetizingly vibrant while offering ultimate nutrition and flavour. Simply blend with coconut water to give the desired consistency. Those speciality seeds, nuts and powders are generally of such neutrality of taste they can be thrown into just about every combo, giving a truly supercharged feel-good boost. Now if that isn't all a welcome ray of light on a dank January day, then I don't know what is.

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Cotswold Fayre Announces Product Launch Shows

The fine food distributor will be hosting a series of launch shows in 2017 to showcase its latest products and suppliers.

The shows offer retailers the chance to meet the Cotswold Fayre team, sample the products and get to know the people who make them. Exclusive offers will also be available for retailers.

Due to the popularity of the 2016 roadshows, Cotswold Fayre has increased the number of shows from four to six. The events will take place from January 17th to February 2nd 2017 and will be held in Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Bracknell, Bristol and London.

Paul Hargreaves, chief executive at Cotswold Fayre said, "In 2017 we will be introducing 35 new suppliers and more than 250 new products to our range. The launch shows are designed for retailers to easily access the entire new range and sample the products before making any purchase decisions."

Retailers can confirm attendance on cotswold-fayre.co.uk.

Sussex Wine Given PDO Green Light

An application for sparkling wines from Sussex to be awarded protected origin status has been granted by Defra, with hopes that it will lead to the area being in the same category as wine-producing areas in Europe.

The award means that the county's wine producers will need to meet stringent quality standards in order to bear the Sussex name on products.

Approval from Defra means it has now been forwarded to the EU for recognition and is hoped to be completed in six months. Sussex

enjoys protected name status during this time period, state Sussex producers.

Mark Driver, owner of the Rathfinny Wine Estate said, "We believe that Sussex will become synonymous with high quality sparkling and still wine. When you go into a bar in London or Tokyo or New York in, say, 20 years time, the waiter will ask you: 'Would you like a glass of Champagne or a glass of Sussex?' This is all about being proud of a region. Sussex will become the quality benchmark within English wine."

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Government Pledges Support of Rural Businesses Post-Brexit

Chancellor Phillip Hammond announced that the minimum wage is set to rise by 4 per cent, from £7.20 to £7.50 for over-25s in his Autumn Statement.

In his first budget statement since becoming chancellor, Hammond has given a boost to the National Living Wage scheme.

National Living Wage was originally launched under his predecessor George Osborne, who had planned for it to reach £9 by 2020.

The rate, which comes into effect from April 2017, could cause concern for independent retailers that already encounter issues from employing a large number of staff.

Labour's shadow chancellor John McDonnell recently pledged that he

will bring in a 'real' living wage of £10 per hour by 2020.

21 to 24 year olds will receive an increase from £6.95 per hour to £7.05, 18 to 20 year olds from £5.55 to £5.60 and 16 to 17 year olds from £4 to £4.05.

Mike Cherry, national chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses said, "Government has listened to FSB's concerns and has announced a more modest increase in the National Living Wage (NLW) to £7.50 per hour. The 4 per cent increase is within the range of small business expectations.

"But small employers will need support, especially looking ahead to steeper increases to meet the 2020 target. Recent FSB research found that 47 per cent of small businesses

cite labour costs as the main driver of the rising cost of doing business. For this reason, we are calling on government to increase the employment allowance from £3,000 to £4,000 to help small businesses increase pay and create jobs."

Some retailers within the independent food sector are welcoming the wage rise. Iain Burnet of The Highland Chocolatier said, "It won't affect The Highland Chocolatier whatsoever. I already pay my staff – regardless of age – the advised living wage, if not more. As an artisan chocolatier, I want to make sure that the quality of our products is the highest possible. The way to do this is to make staff feel valued and appreciated; paying the living wage is a small investment for big returns."

“Today’s announcement of a £7.50 National Living Wage rate in 2017 will result in further staff hours being cut, investment plans being delayed or cancelled altogether, and retailers having to take on more hours in the business to make ends meet”

JAMES LOWMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CONVENIENCE STORES

Government Pledges Support of Rural Businesses Post-Brexit

Environment secretary Andrea Leadsom has expressed support for rural businesses when addressing hundreds of business owners at the Country Land and Business Association's (CLA) rural business conference in Westminster.

During the conference, members of the CLA posed questions to politicians about how they plan to help the agriculture sector to unlock its economic potential.

Speaking before the event, Ross Murray, CLA president and rural business owner said, "Never has it been more important to address the imbalance than today, as the rural economy prepares for the potentially seismic changes of Brexit."

The Defra secretary told

attendees that a small increase in rural productivity has the potential to add billions to the economy. She explained that in the Autumn Statement the chancellor announced a suite of support that will help rural areas, including funding of £23bn for extra innovation and infrastructure over the next five years.

Andrea Leadsom also detailed a list of other plans the government has put in place and said, "Take the funding for a Cambridge to Oxford expressway, which will encourage the development of a 'Silicon Valley of the south'. Or the 100 per cent rural rate relief we are introducing, which means small businesses working hard in their communities no longer have to pay business rates at all.

"We are spending a record £2.5bn on flood defences, funding at least 1,500 new schemes, and we have announced an additional £15m of funding for Natural Food Management. This is so important to rural areas.

"And let's not forget the vital importance of food production, we are also making sure that over one million acres of prime farmland will be better protected from the risk of flooding by 2021.

"And lastly, I would like to mention innovation. I have seen so many impressive developments in agri-tech – and I really believe that our talent for innovation will determine the future of the food and farming industry. That's why the government has invested £160m in an agri-tech strategy."

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



NEW ITALIAN-STYLE DELI FOR LANCASTER

Café and delicatessen Buccelli's has opened in Lancaster city centre, specialising in authentic Italian cuisine.

Manager and head chef Bruno Buccelli, a former TV technician, set up the shop after becoming tired of the nine-to-five routine of his previous job and wished to share

his love of Italian cuisine with the public.

Bruno sources produce from his father's food business based in Rome, which has helped him forge connections with five Italian suppliers located in different regions across the country. All of the staff members are Italian, which Bruno believes will provide an expert service as employees are able

to share traditional customs and knowledge when serving customers.

The deli section sells a variety of dried pasta, sauces, taralli biscuits, tapenada, Caffé Palombini coffee, biscotti and wine. Bruno chose the variety of products to represent a geographical spread of different regions of Italy. Signage next to the products explains traditional serving and pairing suggestions.

"There are no shortcuts with Italian food and I wanted to bring the passion and flavours of authentic Italian cooking to Lancaster," said Bruno. "Buccelli's is located on the same street as other Italian restaurants, but we will offer a completely different experience, with plenty of free tasters and samples, as well as food to eat-in or enjoy at home.

"I can't wait to serve the people of Lancaster. The north west of England is a great place to be and I know the people here love good food. I'm bringing it to them via deli boards, try-before-you-buy incentives and aperitivos."



REVAMP FOR BRINDISA'S BOROUGH MARKET SHOP

After a two week closure, Spanish food shop Brindisa has re-opened its doors after undergoing refurbishment.

The new layout centres around a new white marble counter which showcases Brindisa's core lines of cheese, sliced and whole charcuterie and ham. The shop is also showcasing a new selection of Spanish foods, serving ox chorizo, squid in ink, potted morcilla, cockles in brine, jamón crisps and more.

Alongside the revamped shop area

there has been a new outdoor grill installed, where staff will be serving signature chorizo rolls and a range of other takeaway foods.

Caroline Muir, marketing manager at Brindisa said, "Our favourite aspects of the design include the directional lighting, additional space to operate behind the counter, double till area, brighter environment, better flow of products, amazing cheese area, and, last but by no means least, our huge fridges where all the chilled products can be showcased together in a smart setting."



FARM SHOP & DELI OPENS IN STAFFORDSHIRE

Heartwood Farm Shop & Deli has set up shop in Loynnton Tour Fisheries in Staffordshire, selling products supplied by local growers and producers.

Heartwood is housed in a 2,000-square-foot wooden building and located overlooking the nearby fishing lakes and countryside. The interior of the shop is designed to a traditional style and furnished with scaffold planks, large potato chitting trays and cider apple crates converted into shelving units.

Among the produce and items the farm shop and deli sells are

fresh fruit, vegetables, sauces, cheese, pickles, English wines, locally-brewed bottled beers, cider, cooked meats, charcuterie, homemade pies, fresh bread, sausage rolls and eggs.

There is also a coffee shop and café on-site for visitors to enjoy a hot snack and beverage.

Darren Wood, owner of Heartwood said, "The location is important in terms of its rural feel, and there is also a café on site, so that helps bring foot traffic to us. Locally-sourced and produced food is huge - people love the provenance of food. We think it is important to know where it comes from."



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BREXIT: UK food production

Historically, 90% of agricultural and food industry labourers in the UK are EU nationals, and there was a significant slump in response to job listings in 2016. David Camp, of the Association of Labour Providers, warned that there would not be enough food labour to cover the 2016 Christmas surge. As immigration is curbed, this lack of labour will be more visible.

British food and drink production has seen great growth recently, particularly in Scotland. Exports from its 117 whisky distilleries to France were worth almost £450 million in 2015; whisky sales are unlikely to drop until (or, indeed, if) Brexit legislature passes. Hopefully, the strength of the product means prices will remain stable.

The UK produces 65 products carrying EU appellations ("protected designation of origin" (PDO), "protected geographical indication" (PGI), or "traditional specialities guaranteed" (TSG)), including Cornish pasties, Stilton cheese and Scotch whisky. Not only do these appellations stabilize the monetary value of these products on shelves, they denote them as high quality. Although the UK is set to create its own set of legal appellations for produce, literally equivalent to the existing EU appellations, we may see depreciation in the value of these products and changes in production standards as this is unlikely to be a Brexit priority.

In 2016 Marks and Spencer pledged to keep grocery prices the same or lower, making staying afloat in a sinking economy increasingly difficult for independent suppliers. With an estimated 20% of M&S suppliers coming from the US and Europe, price turbulence is tied to the strength of the pound against the Euro and Dollar. As such, this uncertainty will continue into 2017, following the American elections which swiftly saw the Dollar plummet.

“ Since Brexit, wholesale wine prices have increased by as much as 20%. One option for retailers to avoid tough price hikes is promoting British wine ”

THE 2016 EFFECT

Lucy Talbot asks: 'What does 2017 hold for the independent food and drink sector?'

BREXIT: spag bol is here to stay

Since Brexit, wholesale wine prices have increased by as much as 20%. One option for retailers to avoid tough price hikes is promoting British wine. James Simmonds of Hacker Young told *The Guardian*, "It's uncertain what will happen after Brexit to UK imports of Prosecco and Champagne, but what is clear is that English sparkling wine is already a viable alternative". In 2016, Prosecco magnum sales went up by 140% - presumably consumers were stocking up on their favourite European fizz. With UK consumption of sparkling wine expected to rise by 13% in the next 3 years, perhaps Brexit will be the making of the British fizz trade. There are 133 wineries in England and Wales, among whom 120 medals were distributed at the 2016 International Wine Challenge. Cheers!

Brindisa, one of London's highest regarded purveyors of foreign food, view the economy as the most important guide at the moment: "Since June we have clearly been facing uncertain times. The obvious immediate problem for us as Spanish importers, wholesalers, and retailers, is the weakening of the pound, which has materially increased the cost of our purchases," says Alberto Zurdo, financial director. However, thanks to good planning, Brindisa enjoyed good sales throughout the summer of 2016. Later on in the year, they found they had to increase prices as inflation set in for the foreseeable future.

One thing they're not worried about is the cultural distancing of



the UK from the EU when it comes to fine food: "In the long term, we don't expect that the British appetite for fine foods from the continent will diminish and so our sector will adjust to the new post-Brexit reality." Olé!

While Brindisa's focus is on the "middle term", the food hall at Snape Maltings, which offers a wide range of British and international produce, has pointed out that sourcing quality food always comes with a some price instability, before even considering the political climate. Snape Maltings predicts price increases for spring 2017, according to Kate Morgan, retail director, but stays committed to sourcing unique products that are unavailable elsewhere. It might be that fine produce previously available at supermarkets migrates to the independent sector, where it will find more financial support.

Sugar tax

George Osborne's sugar tax proposals were announced in the budget early in 2016: "Soft drinks companies will pay a levy on drinks [with total sugar content above 5 grams per 100 millilitres] from April 2018. This will be used to double the primary PE and sport premium to £320 million a year."

Brighton and Hove was the first city to adopt a trial scheme to raise awareness of sugar levels in soft drinks. The Sugar Smart Scheme includes retailers offering water as an option in meal deals, improvement to nutrition education in primary schools, and of course the 'tax' that has got people talking. This part of the scheme takes the form of a 10p levy on sugary soft drinks, paid for by the customer and given straight to the Children's Health Fund with the aim of improving Britain's overconsumption of sugar.

Brighton and Hove's involvement in this scheme was met by Brighton University students protesting that the levy encroached on paying adults' freedom to consume sugar.

However, the scheme amassed favourable market research in 2015 and 2016 among customers. In 2015, the trade market research was more cynical; in a survey on attitudes to sugar and ethical standards for nutrition, food outlets were asked, "I would support a voluntary 10p levy on sugar sweetened drinks." 31% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and 50% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Despite some subscription by independent food outlets in the city, a number of establishments expressed practical concerns for the scheme: setting up the levy on their EPOS systems, and communicating the scheme to customers.

David Reed, director of family-run furniture shop and café in Saffron Waldon, Angela Reed, is an advocate of the Sugar Smart Scheme and the future sugar tax. Since they joined the scheme, sales of soft drinks declined by 8% but their overall sales grew. They found that customers ordered alternatives such as no-added-sugar fruit juice.

For David, the levy is worth little in monetary value, but is effective at



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“ It might be that fine produce previously available at supermarkets migrates to the independent sector, where it will find more financial support ”

What started as small, healthy lifestyle choices geared at those who ate free-from has become a big consumer obsession, and in 2016 we started hearing testimonials about how extreme ‘wellness’ has made people ill both mentally and physically.

Several celebrity ‘clean’ cooks have made claims in their recent publications that, for example, drinking milk can leave you calcium deficient, or that eating gluten can let blobs of food enter to your blood system; the former condition relates to overconsumption of calcium pills, and the latter is unique to coeliacs. This advice has been dangerous to those who have narrowed their diets and consequently become intolerant to foods. In some cases, clean eaters have been declared ‘orthorexic’ (obsessed with eating ‘correctly’) and malnourished.

It’s time to respond with a wave of love for nourishing home cooking! Pasta and stews, roast dinners, balanced suppers, family breakfasts – put avocado on it if you must, but let’s look beyond quinoa and raw protein balls. Consumption of health foods and specialty free-from products may not slow down immediately in 2017, but the media response is leaning towards a collective duty to limit how retailers describe ‘clean’ foods as ‘healthier’ than traditional alternatives, especially for those who do not have specific dietary requirements.

Food on camera

The “eat and tweet” phenomenon has developed; food, and especially cooking, has boomed on social media via videos produced by retailers to show how to make

something delicious from the ingredients they sell.

In 2015, 63% of global internet traffic was video sharing; this is set to rise, with spending on video advertising predicted to go up to \$12.82 billion in 2018. In late 2015, food videos started circulating largely thanks to the sponsored media platform Buzzfeed; these videos were 15-second cooking demonstrations and ingredient advertising all in one. Deployable as real-time marketing content, for example with Christmas or Halloween recipes, and adaptable for free-from consumers, these videos are genius.

The great news is that sharing pictures and videos on social media is free, so it’s worth experimenting with your online audience.

The recipe videos tend to be shot from above a work station and sped up to show brief footage of each step of a recipe. The key to their success is time: they should be short and snappy. A few lingering shots of glistening icing or melting cheese at the end is always an effective way to ensure mouthwatering. As Emily Fleischaker of Buzzfeed pointed out, “Everyone’s gotta eat”.

For retailers selling homemade foods, it would be a great way to engage their social audiences with the creation of these products. For those selling ingredients, especially niche and quirky products, it means inspiration for shoppers to branch out and try recipe suggestions.

Food videos have legs for success well into 2017 for independent retailers; the political and economic turbulence means we need comfort food and imaginative distractions!



raising awareness, much like the 5p plastic bags in shops. He points out that even high quality soft drinks such as traditional lemonade or elderflower pressé have ‘hidden’ sugar and sweeteners, whereas cakes and bakes are transparent when it comes to sugar. For him, keeping the tax to soft drinks will have a higher impact than taxing sugary food and drink across the board.

Dirty eating

So much emphasis has been placed on ‘clean eating’ in recent years that a renaissance of no-nonsense, wholesome foods is bound to happen. ‘Wellness’ and ‘clean eating’ labels that have flourished thanks to celebrity endorsement are being questioned by the experts.

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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Alcoholic Birch Sap Beverage Launches

Pure Wild Spirits Ltd has launched a new line of sustainable and natural alcoholic drinks, starting with its birch sap beverage Freya (which is named after the Norse goddess of beauty, love and destiny), hailed as being the first of its kind in the world.

The foraged birch sap is sourced from Northern European forests, where it is harvested once a year during early spring. The company ensures no harm is caused to the surroundings – after selecting the ingredients they're taken to handmade copper pot stills for the fermenting and distillation process.

Dave Wallwork, founder of Pure Wild Spirits Ltd said, "Freya has a light, fruity aroma and a full taste with hints of fresh, green flavours, subtle vanilla and natural woody notes. Sustainability is at the heart of Freya – it's made from natural birch sap sourced from wild trees using age-old methods. The trees are unharmed by the traditional process and grow to provide more sap every spring."

freyaspirit.com



Bean Crisp Brand Brought to UK

Fine food importer Empire Bespoke Foods has launched American brand Beanitos onto the UK healthy snacking market.

The crisps are made from whole beans that are carefully sorted, washed and cooked in small batches. They are then combined with whole-grain rice to create a nutritious dough. Finally, they are cut into crisps, baked and flash-fried with a dusting of sea salt or seasoning.

There are three flavours currently available, including Simply Pinto, The Original and Restaurant Style, all made from different varieties of beans. The range is also gluten, MSG and GMO-free and suitable for vegans.

Nicholas Thomas, sales and marketing director at Empire Bespoke Foods said, "Health is now a key driver in food and drink consumption. That is why we are determined to lead the way within the healthier segment of the UK savoury snacking category with Beanitos bean chips. In the USA, Beanitos is the number one brand, with a presence in the healthier independent stores nationwide." empirebespokefoods.com

Redesign for Kitchen Garden Foods

Jam and condiment maker Kitchen Garden Foods has undergone a rebrand across its entire portfolio.

The range of jams, chutneys, marmalades, dressings and condiments has been given a fresh design to reflect the company's ethos of sourcing local ingredients and producing in small batches.

The redesign project was undertaken by illustrator Oliver Moinet, who also helped to design the company's new brochure and website. The newly packaged products will be rolled out from January 2017, with a launch party for existing and potential stockists planned for the following March.

Barbara Moinet, director said, "We have always believed that a company like ours needs to stay ahead of the game by refreshing

the brand every few years to reflect current trends and maintain the correct position in the marketplace. This will be our fifth rebrand in 27 years!

"The new look is eye-catching and vibrant and marries two sides of

Kitchen Garden Foods; traditional values with an innovative approach to current food trends and packaging designs.

"We worked with students from Gloucestershire University who conducted focus groups, market research and consumer surveys to find out what people think Kitchen Garden Foods represents and how this relates to what they perceive from the packaging and pricing." kitchengardenpreserves.co.uk




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New Butter Brand Hits Shelves

Caerphilly-based butter company **The Softer Butter Co** has released new packs of butter which are spreadable straight from the fridge.

The secret recipe for the Salted and Unsalted Butter varieties is reported to make them more than 50 per cent softer than some major brands and supermarket own labels, and took the team of dairy experts two years to develop.

Made using the cream of British cows, they can be spread on toast or

used in baking with no need to leave them out to soften. The butters also contain no vegetable oil or additives. Nigel Lloyd, managing director said, "Butter is a natural product and it makes sense to offer the consumer the full benefits of this combined with the additional convenience and functionality our product offers. We are confident from the research we have carried out and customer feedback that consumers love our softer butter."

thesofterbutterco.co.uk



Nuva Releases New Flavours

Naturally-flavoured water brand **Nuva** is adding two new varieties to its range of spring waters.

The new flavours, Raspberry & Blueberry and Tangerine & Mango, join the existing Cucumber & Garden Mint, Ginger & Lemon and Melon & Jasmine options. Nuva bottled waters are 100 per cent sugar and additive-free, made from completely natural extracts, and come in 500ml clear plastic recyclable bottles.

Gemma Pond, co-founder of Nuva said, "We wanted to create a completely natural drink aimed at people who like to stay hydrated but might find plain water a bit boring, and don't want all the sugar, sweeteners, preservatives and calories that some 'natural' drinks are often packed with."

nuva.co.uk

New Charcuterie from Broughgammon

Northern Irish producer of goat and rose veal, **Broughgammon** has added two new charcuterie products to its range of meats.

The company, based on a family farm in Antrim, has developed a Kid Goat Pancetta and a free-range Rose Veal Carpaccio. The Goat Pancetta is made from goat belly from the farm's 300 strong herd, which is cured for three weeks in juniper, black pepper and garlic.

Millie Cole, director of Broughgammon said, "Innovation is the lifeblood of our business. Our strategic focus is on maximising the potential of our animals through the creation of new products which will encourage consumers to try cabrito



and rose veal – meats which don't usually feature on dinner tables in Northern Ireland and the Republic." broughgammon.com

Doves Farm Expands Free-From Range

Family-owned Wiltshire millers **Doves Farm** has increased its free-from range by releasing two new pasta varieties: **Maize and Rice Tortiglioni** and **Brown Rice Tortiglioni**.

The new pastas extend Doves Farm's pasta offering to 10 products, all of which are organic, gluten-free and made in Italy. Aimed at catering to those with intolerances, the two new products are also free-from gluten, milk, peanut, egg and soya, and certified by the Soil Association, Coeliac UK and Kosher.

Clare Marriage, co-founder of Doves Farm said, "We are continuing to innovate to create new products for an ever-increasing number of consumers searching for good quality staples like our new pastas." dovesfarm.co.uk



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With consumers becoming more passionate than ever about the standard of their meat, Japanese Hida Beef offers a unique combination of heritage, flavour and quality

If you're looking for fine Wagyu beef with a story, look no further than the beef produced in the Gifu Prefecture of Japan. Renowned for its breathtaking scenery, the region also boasts the longest history of producing fine Wagyu cattle – as well as dedicated and passionate farmers and workers who bring this Japanese delicacy to the world.

Wagyu beef is considered by many to be the best in the world, and this standard is heightened even further by Hida-Gyu, made from the black-haired cattle located in the Hida region of Gifu Prefecture. As well as ticking boxes where quality is concerned, the beef can also boast impressive provenance, ethical and health credentials.

The home of Hida Beef

Hida Beef comes exclusively from the Gifu Prefecture of Japan, a largely forest-covered area of 10,621 square kilometres. High mountains of the North Alps are located in the northern area of the region, including Mt. Ontake and Mt. Norikuradake, which stands at 3,000 metres.

The region is revered for its landscape which boasts breathtaking mountain views, hot springs and World Heritage sites; its clean air, pure water and wide expanses of land unquestionably play a part in producing some of the best beef in the world.

Hida-Gyu cattle

The story of Hida Beef begins with a single animal, named Yasufuku, who came to the Hida region from Hyogo Prefecture in 1981. Yasufuku is said to have possessed the DNA to produce the very best meat-yielding calves, and his bloodline includes a number of animals which have further expanded the Hida Beef brand, including Hida Shirakiyo, Shirakiyo 85-3 and Hana-Kiyokuni. Yasufuku sired 39,000 offspring during his lifetime.

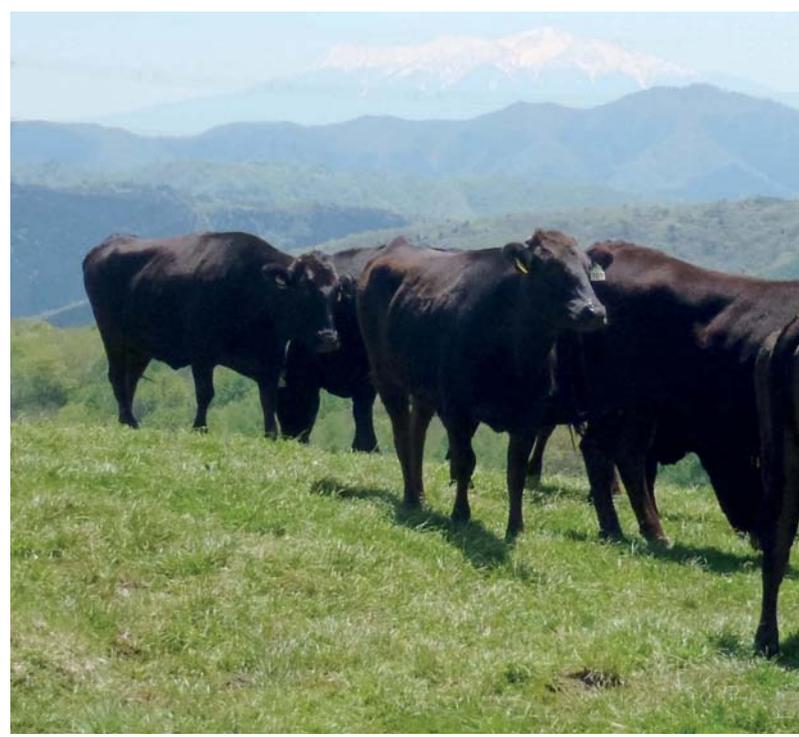
All Hida-Gyu cattle are exceptionally cared for – as well as feeding on lush meadows, each one

is massaged regularly to guarantee top quality meat. The cattle are fattened for 14 months, exclusively by farmers accredited by the Hida Beef Brand Promotion Conference. The Gifu Prefecture's farmers are highly regarded for their fattening techniques, which generate significantly more meat than the national average. The beef itself must be awarded a Yield Grade of A or B and the texture and firmness a grade of 3, 4 or 5; these grades

are dictated by the Japan Meat Grading Association. Once the beef has met all the strict criteria of the Conference, it is issued with a Hida Beef label, which lists the grade of the meat, an individual identification number, the name and address of the producer, and the certification date.

Winner at the 'Wagyu Olympic Games'

The reputation of Hida Beef was cemented in 2002 when it won the top honours at the eighth All-Japan National Wagyu Cattle Expo, an event so large it is often referred to as the 'Wagyu Olympic Games'. Held every five years, the



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event sees the finest Wagyu cattle from across Japan compete to be named the country's best. Hida Beef's winning streak continued into the next competition and beyond.

Recognition of the quality of Hida Beef continues, with it achieving straight victories at the Beef Cattle Expo in 2012, 2013 and 2015. This competition hosts every prefecture, each of which exhibits its best Kobe, Omi and Matsuzuka beef among others.

HOW TO SERVE

However you cook Hida-Gyu beef, you are guaranteed a fantastic meat. Thanks to its uniquely fine and eye-catching marbling – both within the meat itself and the fat surrounding the cuts – Hida Beef can boast flavour and texture of unique quality.

To serve as a classic steak, firstly heat a frying pan to a high temperature and leave for a few minutes to ensure an even, steady

heat. Lubricate the pan with butter or oil, then place the steak in the pan for one and a half minutes on each side before taking off the heat and seasoning with salt and pepper. While it can be tempting to only serve Hida Beef steak very simply in order to enjoy its special characteristics without distraction, to do so would be to ignore its impressive versatility. Why not try it in a Shabu-Shabu (hotpot) recipe, or as the ultimate gourmet burger?

“ The region's clean air, pure water and wide expanses of land unquestionably play a part in producing some of the very best beef in the world ”

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TURNER & GEORGE



“How to source the best meat”

As co-owners of our own butcher's shop on London's St. John Street, our business relies upon us being able to source some of the best quality meat available to us in the UK. We're lucky to be in a position that allows us access to amazing producers, but unfortunately not everyone has that opportunity, particularly within a meat industry that has had to adapt and change (mostly for the worse) to meet increasing demand within recent years.

Because of these changes, much of what we think we know about finding quality meat is wrong. Some of it is based upon what supermarkets have led us to believe good meat should look like, through years of marketing and advertising. Some is even based upon what the USDA tells American citizens in an attempt to promote the more profitable corn and grain-fed meats, and here in the UK, thanks to our love for their cooking styles, we've picked up a lot of this information. Based upon our knowledge, we've come up with this guide to pick the best beef you can find, as well as things to look out for.

Smell: For us, smell is the most important factor in choosing good beef. If meat smells pleasant then it's good, unpleasant and it's bad. Freshly cut steak will have a sweet and slightly meaty smell; meat cut for too long will smell sour, as will anything wet aged in a bag.

Touch: Good beef won't be wet or sticky to the touch, nor should it be soft and mushy.

Colour: Grass fed beef is a deeper red than a well marbled, grain finished

steak. When a steak is cut and the outside is exposed to oxygen, the meat will turn a bright red or 'bloom'. If it's not freshly cut, bright red indicates that the steak has been kept in an oxygen free environment like a vacuum bag. Supermarkets are leaders in 'wet-ageing', the process in which steaks are vacuum packed to keep them looking fresh.

Although it's these factors that we mostly consider when buying meat, it's also prudent to remember that great beef comes from animals that are grass-fed as nature intended, of a pure breed, free-range, at least two to preferably three years old and growth promoter-free.

Don't be afraid to do your research; ask questions from your supplier about how the meat was farmed, where it was farmed and how old it was at slaughter. If they can answer these questions and they're open and give honest answers, then you know you're in the right place.

Tasty and good quality meat takes time and money to grow and rear, and will have been treated with much more respect than those which have been industrially farmed. Ultimately, the resulting meat will be far tastier when cooked.

We're fortunate enough to be able to visit a lot of farms throughout the UK, so we get to see first-hand the welfare standards, meet the farmers and ask all of the right questions. Only then, if we're satisfied, do we buy. Whilst it might come down to the above factors, a lot of the time there's really only one moral compass that we go by, and that's from our own experience in working within this industry.

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My mother's green fingers and love of cooking were key to the formation of the business. We had a beautiful garden when I was growing up, in which she grew three types of gooseberries, black cherries, raspberries and strawberries. Mum was a keen cook and maker of drinks, and we always had homemade lemonade and elderflower cordial at home. That was really the beginning of the business – my father was a fruit farmer, originally a tatty farmer – and he had been very successful back in the day, but in the 1970s he was walking around his pick-your-own farm and realised it wasn't really working. He wondered how to get people picking the strawberries along the edges of the field, then came home and asked my mother what she thought about him producing a fresh strawberry drink. She had 30 bottles of elderflower cordial to make for friends and family already, so he challenged her to make 100 boxes and that's how it all began – with mum's homemade recipe, made in the kitchen at home. They were soon all sold, and before we knew it the business was born. I'd been living my own life in London so hadn't kept a very close eye on his business, but eight years into it, when my father was nearly 70, he asked me to take a look at the figures with a view to taking it over. I was very pleasantly surprised. This was in 1992, and following this we worked together for a few years until he died.

In the early years, running a business is very lonely. Fear of failure drives you on. There's no safety net when you work for yourself – if you go bust, that's it and you're back to the grindstone – so it's kind of do or die. I certainly think it was at that time, still is in fact. Back then, when you're a tiny business and struggling to grow in the teeth of competition, it's imperative that you have a real drive to succeed. I wanted to bring mum's elderflower cordial to the world – that's what drove me initially. We couldn't take off like a rocket because every year we needed to stop and pick more elderflowers, which slowed the process down a bit. And if the weather's rubbish, who wants to go out and pick them?

This job is fun. It's a challenge to grow the business in such a competitive environment. We were one of the very first brands producing grown up fruit cordials, and certainly the very first to sell elderflower cordial. Elderflower cordial has long been loved as a homemade drink, something mothers and grandmothers have made at home, but we were the first to bring it to the mainstream market.

It's all about people and products for me. We've got a nice company full of nice people making nice drinks. I certainly try to make it a lovely place to work! You have to believe in your product and be confident that it's special in order to do your best work. It's all about



THE INTERVIEW: PEV MANNERS

Ever wondered what it takes to make a homegrown business a global phenomenon? Pev Manners shows us how it's done

“ You have to believe in your product and be confident that it's special in order to do your best work. It's all about having belief in your product, belief in yourself that you can do it, and the energy, oomph and determination to get on with it and get the job done ”

having belief in your product, belief in yourself that you can do it, and the energy, oomph and determination to get on with it and get the job done.

It's difficult to say how the fine food market will evolve over the coming months and years, although I can say that it is very intense and there's a lot of pressure in terms of price. It's very hard out there at the moment. This is where the importance of range comes in. We offer independents products which aren't stocked by the multiples so they can maintain their point of difference. It's about being distinctive and different, and personal service rather than the impersonality of supermarkets. You've got to find something which makes your business different.

'Make products as nice as you can, not as cheap as you can, and hope people will buy them' – that's our philosophy. We've always made our drinks as delicious as possible, we don't value-engineer our products and try to get away with using sub-par ingredients. You won't find that kind of conversation in our NPD meetings. Instead, we make it as wonderful tasting as it can be and fight our corner when someone wants it for a low price.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

STANDING OUT

Jim Walker inspires me, as he built up the most astounding export business. Mrs Baxter, who created Baxter's, inspires me too – basically, people who've built up family businesses to a really great scale because I know how difficult it is! Julian Metcalfe who set up Pret a Manger, Metcalfe's popcorn and Itsu, too, and Johnny Boden and Charlie Bigham. They've all taken huge punts to do things properly.

FAMILY

Each year that goes by people ask if we can make our product cheaper, and every time I say no. I'm no money bags, we only take about 10% profit from the business and most of that goes back into the business, but we do a lot of good – we give a lot of bottles away to charity (we never turn down a request) and make charitable donations left, right and centre.

THE FUTURE

I hope for more of the same in the coming year: a gentle growth in sales which will help us to bring our lovely drinks to more people all over the world. And hopefully see off some of the horrible new competitors coming into the market!

MAKING IT WORK

Businesses can only go one way – up or down – so you need to go forwards and grow. Inventing and launching new products is wonderful, and our export market is hugely exciting at the moment. We're now exporting to Shanghai, working with bars in Ibiza and Soho House in Barcelona – how cool is that! I don't

take any of the credit for this, but I do get a real sense of satisfaction when people tell me how much they enjoy our products.

In 24 years running your own business, you learn everything about running a business! Although I've never gone bust, thank goodness. I've learned about costing, selling, marketing, finance, sales admin,

purchasing, logistics, supply chain – you name it, I've done it! The learning curve is so steep that I learn something new every day. I've now employed people who are better than me at everything, so I learn from them. We want people who are experts in their field to help us grow.

I've made many mistakes in my time, all of which I've learned a great

deal from. They include changing packaging when it wasn't necessary, product launches which either weren't exciting or didn't fit with the rest of the range. The trouble is that you have to work fast and trust your gut, the combination of which doesn't always equal the perfect product. I've learned not to rush into anything – although as an entrepreneur I do still like to have a pop at things sometimes.

I think competitors go bust often because they don't come up with new products. They launch with three products and 10 years later they still just have those three products; they've done nothing to intrigue and excite their customers during that time. Their consumers are wondering what's new, and are not being satisfied. The world moves on and people want new things.



TOP DRAWER SPRING/SUMMER 2017

Adventures in the Food Emporium at Top Drawer: a slice of giftable foodie heaven

Making a triumphant return, Top Drawer's Food Emporium is the destination of choice for creative retailers embarking on an exploration of the finest giftable food products.

The Food Emporium is located within Top Drawer at Olympia London and takes place 15th-17th January.

Double the size of its debut edition in 2016, this January the Food Emporium will present over 80 of the best artisans and producers, offering a delicious collection of irresistible edibles, from oils and

condiments to seasonal treats and confectionery.

Edible gifting

Giftable food has been increasing in popularity for buyers and consumers, and Top Drawer is perfectly poised to provide for this growing need. The Food Emporium offers goods from across the whole food gifting spectrum including confectionery, savouries, oils, preserves, spices, drinks, seasonal foods and more – all located within the airy Olympia London.

Buyers will have the chance to source everything they need to stock

their own slice of foodie heaven from exhibitors including Anglesey Sea Salt, Hawkshead Relish Company, Olives et Al, Fudge Kitchen, Joe & Seph's, Pinkster Gin, Sloe Motion, Lyme Bay Winery, Ross & Ross, Elderbrook Drinks and Hasslacher's Hot Chocolate.

Many emerging and established food brands will be launching new ranges and products at Top Drawer this January. Hawkshead Relish, the British preserves brand, will be revealing an indulgent range of three sweet spreads under the name MUDD. Bonieri, the Italian gianduja chocolate makers, will be diversifying their selection to include a sugar-free alternative to the traditional confection.

Another interesting trend is emerging – food kits as gifts. These have become increasingly popular as people take to making and baking at home. Top Drawer buyers will have plenty to choose from, with bacon and salmon curing kits from Ross & Ross, raw chocolate making kits from Choc Chic and cake kits from Bake at Home.



New talent

Top Drawer also supports emerging talents in food gifting, such as the newly formed Popcorn Shed – which only launched this summer but is already stocked in Harrods' flagship store in Knightsbridge – and the vibrant Elderbrook Drinks will be showcasing their beautifully designed and packaged ranges of luxury drinks.

The Food Emporium at Top Drawer will have plenty of new flavours and brands to discover for the year of buying ahead.

Created to inspire

Food Emporium is part of the worlds of Top Drawer comprising: Home, Gift, Fashion and Craft. Top



Drawer's new global edit presents an exclusively curated pick of around 1,000 UK and international brands across the lifestyle landscape.

Created to inspire the buying of innovative retailers looking for design-led, commercially appealing original products, showcasing directional European and global lifestyle brands alongside Britain's best-loved labels and new talent.

Buyers are invited to register for their complimentary pass at topdrawer.co.uk.

“ The Food Emporium at Top Drawer gives retailers a unique chance to source from the most comprehensive selection of giftable food items ever presented in one place. Food gifting is a growing sector that provides genuine opportunities for retailers to add value to their offer, and as it's Top Drawer, every exhibitor is carefully selected for quality, originality and commercial appeal. It's worth a visit for the tasting opportunities alone! ”

EVENT DIRECTOR ALEJANDRA CAMPOS

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S/S 17
EDITION

CURATING YOUR CHOCOLATE COLLECTION

Consumers are paying close attention to provenance, craft and innovation. With this craving for quality increasing, it's paramount retailers' chocolate choices are up to scratch

While craft and premium chocolate have been shorthand for quality in the confectionery world for years, this approach is now influencing the mainstream as well. In fact, Mintel states that between 2011 and 2015, there was a 72% increase in the number of fine chocolate products launched globally, with 7% of these marketed as 'premium'. However,

it's not just the standard of the cocoa beans which are piquing shoppers' interests, consumers are fostering an insatiable appetite for avant garde designs, left-field ingredients and health-boosting credentials.

This surge in popularity also stems from an attitude shift towards the health benefits of artisan chocolate. Mintel's research reveals that consumers across Europe laud it as healthy fare, with one quarter of Spanish people agreeing that chocolate is healthy, followed by 21% in Poland, 20% in France and 19% in Italy. Psychological stimulation (science has shown that consuming a piece of chocolate releases endorphins) plays a part in the perception of the health benefits of chocolate, but also superfood brands and bloggers championing raw chocolate for its high volume of antioxidants helps, too. In fact, it can contain nearly four times the amount of processed dark chocolate and 20 times more than blueberries. All of these characteristics and trends are important to take note of when sourcing your stock.

Single origin to luxury truffles

Sharon Longcroft, co-owner of premium chocolate shop Sweet Fink in York ensures that her stock reflects that of her main customer base's tastes, while also offering undiscovered gems. She prides the business on selling confectionery that cannot commonly be found in the multiples. "We stock the unusual and products that exude quality," she says.

Sharon believes paying attention to the art of service and offering bespoke gift packaging pays dividends, saying, "We want customers to find gifts that make their recipient feel extra special. We also don't just sell confectionery, we provide a service and help people create a gift, rather than just bagging the sale." She believes that, "customers recognise quality and have knowledge about types of cocoa. The story is also important to them. They are increasingly health-conscious and look at the labelling for additives and allergy information, as well as looking for high cocoa content and free-from products." Salted caramel continues

to remain a strong favourite in bars and loose truffles, Sharon explains: "People generally seem more adventurous with flavours, selecting Earl Grey and cardamom over coffee or coconut."

Pinpointing consumer trends and buying habits is a beneficial aspect of running a specialist shop, but staying ahead of the curve is also hugely important. When it comes to companies and products that should be on well-educated sellers' radars, Sharon lists, "From Yorkshire we stock Guppy's Chocolates, Lauden and newcomers Nut Free Chox. Internationally-acclaimed brands such as Francois Doucet (the Pâte de Fruits are great sellers); Dolfin from Belgium with its beautifully-packaged chocolate bars sell well as gifts; as does the chocolate-covered salted liquorice from Swedish company Lakritsfabriken."

Premium pleasure

One company that pays close attention to consumer demand and trends is Fenwick. From Rózsavölgyi Csokoládé to Monty Bojangles, the buyers tirelessly seek out exemplary options for discerning chocolate lovers. Adam



Barber, senior buyer at Fenwick says, "We aim for our product and services to be different to that of our main competitors and a key way we do this is to visit as many trade shows as possible. We also work with lots of local suppliers, which is something they cannot do."

In terms of understanding his customers, Adam says, "They're currently looking for healthier alternatives suitable for those with dietary requirements, such as sugar-free or raw. We're also still seeing growth in premium chocolate bars, and our customers are still looking for niche and interesting flavours that they cannot get anywhere else. Our customer demographic has changed over the last few years and they're looking for higher cocoa content and want to know the origin of the chocolate."

TREND WATCH

● TURMERIC

Superfoods are increasingly making an appearance in chocolate bars, so it's a natural progression that healthy herbs and spices will, too. Turmeric boasts beneficial qualities and pairs wonderfully with dark chocolate, creating an all-round comforting experience.

● SUGAR-FREE

Sugar has been a major topic of conversation the past year or so, and many artisan chocolatiers are experimenting with bars completely eschewing the ingredient. Expect more options on the shelves.

● ASIAN INGREDIENTS

Including strong, savoury Asian ingredients in truffles has been gathering attention in the chocolate world. Flavours like wasabi, soy sauce and miso have been used, with the more subtle notes of matcha green tea also proving a popular option.



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Don't settle for slabs of lacklustre chocolate – seek out these products for a deluxe collection

1 CHOCOCO: Dark Chocolate Drops From Tanzania

These 75% Tanzanian-origin dark chocolate drops are made with fine Trinitario beans, grown in the Kyela district of the Mbeya region in south-west Tanzania.

“Cocoa product is actually very small in Tanzania compared to their coffee industry,” says Claire Burnet, co-founder of Chococo. “They produce spectacular cacao beans with subtle fruit notes, which, unusually, include a hint of banana. Given its high cocoa content, this chocolate has a surprisingly creamy mouthfeel and a soft finish, making it very easy to eat. It also works well when creating any chocolate bake that contains fruit, as it enhances the fruity flavours.”

chococo.co.uk



5 BEECH'S: Lime and Chilli

“The Lime and Chilli bar is one of our most popular flavours – everyone loves the colours and design of the packaging,” says Andrew Whiting, chairman of Beech’s. “All our products are made in small batches by our skilled chocolate makers. We designed this flavour over a number of months and now sell more of it than the others in the range.”

“We made it this way to allow the clear citrus flavour of the lime to establish itself before being complemented by the chilli.” beechsfinechocolates.com



2 THE CHOCOLATE TREE: Whisky Nibs

This 70% classic dark chocolate bar is made from a South American cacao, which is blended with whisky-infused nibs to bring it a texture and taste contrast that stimulates the taste buds.

“We have taken rare heirloom cacao nibs from South America and soaked them in premium single malt whisky from Islay, an island producing whisky famous for its peat smoke and sea air notes,” says Alastair Gower, owner of The Chocolate Tree. “Once the whisky has gently evaporated from the nibs they are blended with this exceptional single origin chocolate.”

choctree.co.uk



6 DOISY & DAM: Maple, Toasted Rice & Pink Salt

Superfood chocolate company Doisy & Dam is never one to shy away from exploring unusual combinations of flavours, textures and aromas. In this bar, 74% single origin dark chocolate is complemented by toasted rice pieces, maple syrup and Himalayan pink salt.

Ed Smith, co-founder said, “Whenever we create new flavours, we always look to include a taste, a texture or a superfood, or a combination of the above. The key for us is to make these elements mix together to create a unique flavour experience. We chose maple as a base flavour because of the way it works with our Dominican cacao, toasted rice because the puffed texture gives a bit of chew and crunch, and Himalayan pink salt to create a bite to balance the other flavours.”

doisyanddam.com



7 MONTEZUMA'S: Crème de Cacao

“We source our organic cacao for the Crème de Cacao from a co-operative of over 9,000 small plantations in the Dominican Republic and a smaller co-op in Peru,” says Helen Pattinson, co-founder of Montezuma’s. “There is a solid social structure among these co-ops, whereby re-investment into the local community is key, making their cocoa sustainable, equitable and profitable. We also have a strong connection with South America, as it was there our chocolate dream came to fruition.”

“Many of our truffles are vegan-friendly and made using organic coconut oil, which gives the truffles a creamier texture and taste.”

montezumas.co.uk



3 WILLIE'S CACAO: Raspberries & Cream

“There are few flavours so quintessentially English and as heartwarming as raspberries and cream,” explains Willie Harcourt-Cooze, founder of Willie’s Cacao. “It’s just a flavour combination that works so well, with the tartness of raspberries mellowed by and cutting through the cream. Just the idea of it makes me smile.”

“I have looked at almost every fruit you can imagine from countries all round the world. Some like passion fruit go better with milk chocolate, some like raisins with dark, but in every case you need one with the acidity to carry its flavour through the chocolate. A pear, for example, is a beautiful thing but it gets totally overpowered by chocolate.”

williescacao.com



4 AUBEL CHOCOLATE: Gianduja

“This is a triple layer of Gianduja using three chocolates: white, milk and dark. They’re all topped with a thin layer of dark chocolate to balance the sweetness from the triple layer,” says Natasha Sutton, chief chocolatier at Aubel.

“Each layer is made by firstly making a paste of roasted blanched almonds or ground almonds and then carefully mixing it with tempered chocolate and sugar. This recipe has also inspired me to make almond and pistachio Gianduja, which is proving to be very popular, too.”

aubelchocolate.com



8 ZOTTER: Peru “Huallaga Nativo” 75%

Zotter obtains selected Nativo cocoa beans from small farmers in the Alto Huallaga region in the upper reaches of the Huallaga river in Peru to create this bar. It was this lesser-explored location where the company found a few remaining farmers who are still cultivating this cocoa. “This means that in our Peru Huallaga Nativo chocolate you can enjoy one of the best cocoa types in the world,” says Keith Lowe of Zotter. “Nativo cocoa is a mixture of Criollo and Trinitario. Criollo makes up only 0.001% of the world’s cocoa harvest.”

Josef Zotter, owner says, “It’s hard to find old aromatic fine cocoa, but in the remote Huallaga region it still exists. We had to travel by dugout canoe to discover this hidden treasure.”

zotter.co.uk



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1 FIELD FARE ALL BUTTER CROISSANTS

These authentic croissants are made in France with 100% butter – simply remove them from the freezer the night before to allow them to prove. They will triple in size by the morning and are baked in just 10 minutes, giving you an irresistible breakfast of freshly-baked croissants. field-fare.com



2 MAISON FRANCIS MIOT PEACH & ROSE FLOWER JAM

A popular flavour from the floral jam range. Artisanal techniques, such as low-temperature cooking, make Maison Francis Miot one of the world's most awarded jam makers. "Their expertise over more than three decades meant I had complete confidence in their products," says Alain Roux, chef-patron at The Waterside Inn. thefinefoodforager.co.uk



3 DARK WOODS COFFEE UNDER MILK WOOD COFFEE

"Our award-winning, best-selling coffee is the perfect breakfast brew, whether espresso, cappuccino or cafetiere," says Damien Blackburn of Dark Woods. "Winning the Golden Fork from the North of England in the Great Taste Awards, this is a versatile, caramelly coffee that's perfect for both café and coffee shop use and for stocking on retail shelves." darkwoodcoffee.co.uk





4 EAT NATURAL BUCKWHEAT SUPER GRANOLA

“The ultimate breakfast with benefits that’s bursting with tasty hand-mixed ingredients,” says Susanne Fraser, marketing manager. “It’s packed with pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds and roasted chickpeas, and sweetened naturally with coconut and honey. It’s ideal for those looking for an indulgent breakfast which is high in protein, gluten-free and high in fibre.”
eatnatural.co.uk



5 TIM'S DAIRY GREEK-STYLE YOGHURT

Yogurt is breakfast’s best friend, and this award-winning, creamy Greek-style option from Tim’s Dairy is ideal. Made with fresh British milk, cream and only natural ingredients, it delivers on great taste and quality. The natural yogurt has no added sugar, either. Delicious with muesli, granola, fruit, nuts or honey, it is the perfect ingredient to start anyone’s day.
timsdairy.co.uk



6 ABERNETHY BUTTER

Proper butter takes time, skill and knowledge, and that’s what Will and Allison Abernethy inherited from previous generations when they started making it. Traditionally hand-crafted, pure and additive-free, a simple pinch of salt completes the process before it is patted into their distinctive rolls and hand-wrapped.
abernethybuttercompany.com



7 FIELD FARE SUMMER FRUITS

The perfect prepared mix for smoothies (containing strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, redcurrants and blackcurrants) – just add orange juice and blend in seconds to give a nutritious, refreshing breakfast drink. Freezing fruit locks in goodness, flavours and textures, preserving it in its freshest state and providing at least one of your five-a-day per glass.
field-fare.com



GETTING SYSTEMS RIGHT FIRST TIME

EPOS systems are a necessary expense, but all too often businesses invest in cheaper, sub-par technology which cause problems later down the line. Nigel Bogle, founder and CEO of Lakeland Computers explains how to get it right first time



First things first: all systems are not created equally, and the 'solution' provided has to be more than the sum of its parts. You will only get one chance to spend your money! Choose wisely and you'll have robust systems and customer service backup to support you and the growth of your business for years to come. Choose badly and you'll have the biggest headache imaginable and guess what... you won't have a second chance. You'll be forced to live with the consequences for years, at a time when your business needs all the help it can get to make sure it gets into the black and stays there.

Here are nine areas to think about:

1 EPOS Electronic Point Of Sale: Your till, basically. The funnel through which most of your bricks and mortar shop

transactions will flow through. This is also the tool which will enable you to improve customer service and shopping experience. Timed promotions, integrated customer loyalty schemes, intelligent vouchers, gift cards, discount cards, account transactions. These are all bits of functionality which will allow you to sell more whilst making sure your customers' expectations of value and experience are met.

2 WEIGHING Whether you have integrated weighing at your checkout or simply at your serve-over counters, this is an area where quality matters. Make sure you look to tried and tested industry experts and get something which is genuinely linked to your back office system, otherwise you'll spend years of your life making simple price changes in multiple places needlessly.

3 ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS There are lots of options available now, with most credit/debit cards being chip and pin enabled and an absolute essential consideration for retailers in the food space. Think about your likely or actual average basket spend. If it's under £30 then contactless should also be a serious consideration for customer convenience. Couple this with a solution that is fully integrated with your tills and you'll be on your way to getting your customers through the checkout faster.

4 STOCK CONTROL Think of all that money tied up in stock. Where's it going? What's selling? What's not? How is your margin being affected by waste? If you don't keep an eye on this, chances are you'll be losing a lot of money.

5 REPORTING Coupled with point 4. Get clear on what's happening in your business

by running some key reports regularly to keep abreast of areas that need attention. What do you sell most of? Are your suppliers earning their keep on your shelves? Are your departmental margins where they ought to be? A good reporting tool is an essential requirement. If you can also avail of operational support to help you interpret the figures then so much the better.

6 LABELLING Shelf edge, counter, product, discount... there are lots of labels to think about and inevitably to produce. Having your labelling solution linked to your main product database is essential, and make sure you keep up to speed on all the changes in legislation. Nutritional information, allergens and the like are now imperative.

7 HOSPITALITY INTEGRATION Seems obvious to say, but what you need in a hospitality environment is not the same as in

your shop. Find a vendor who has a dedicated hospitality module, providing focused features that also integrate properly with your other POS tills to allow you to enable your customers to shop how they want to. It's all about the customer experience. Think about what you'd like if you were the customer.

8 SUPPORT Often overlooked initially in preference to price on a quote, but believe me it makes a huge difference. Talk to people who've been beyond the cuddly initial interaction and have had the reassurance that good support is always there when something inevitably doesn't go just the way you'd planned.

9 IT INFRASTRUCTURE In simple terms, if the foundation (i.e. your network) is not right then whatever you put on top of it (i.e. tills, computers, payment machines, iPads) will have problems.

“ Farm shops, delis, coffee shops, cheesemongers, butchers and bakers, all feature heavily in our daily lives and these customers, many of whom are now some of my dearest friends, are very much the purpose and focus of our existence – our raison d'être, if you like ”

a square meal in a round tub

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GEORGE PAUL OF BRADBURY'S

“Blurred vision”

Rarely has a year ahead looked so confused as when trying to predict the opportunity and challenges that face the dairy trade in 2017.

For some it will be a nightmare of unknowns, for others in the speciality cheese trade I think it will be a good year, despite virtually all parts of the trade facing the same issues.

For those who dropped prices in line with milk, which was at 32p in 2014 then fell to the lows of 20p and below, are doing nothing unreasonable by seeking to recover the passed on savings.

However, those who moved not at all in that period and now use milk moving up towards 27-28p as the justification for increase is close to Marmite's world approach, especially as other inflationary costs have been below 2% for several years.

Currency for continental importers is still a major headache, slipping as it has more than 15%, albeit 'Trump power' has seen it rise a few percent at the time of writing. Brexit and Article 50 on 31st March, dependent on a legal case, the challenges of the Scottish and

Welsh parliaments, and the mischief making of so many, leaves Sterling on a rollercoaster, predicted at par one-to-one and 1.24 depending on whose view you take. It's no recipe for stable trading, and importers will still be on tenterhooks wondering whether to cover forward or not.

Vintage Cheddar, extra mature Cheddar, and even mature Cheddar are becoming shorter in supply and even shorter in profile, and still many buyers are in denial. There will need to be some rapid adaptations, and I see profiles falling and prices rising.

Exports will boom in 2017, driven harder by improved prices through lower exchange rates, and we shall see transfer to UK makers of an overseas Cheddar demand opportunity that previously went to Ireland.

The demand for aged cheese will further stress the availability issue, and the willingness for overseas buyers to pay a premium over UK markets will see vintage and extra mature heading overseas.

Small makers will find themselves flavour of the year for both retailers and caterers, however the strict caveat is that technical proficiency

will need to be fully demonstrated. A number of major retailers have adapted their positions on the approach to a lower-than-BRC standard, but the strict requirements must be observed. The reward is of course good national exposure and brand opportunity, but the learning for makers is that the hard work begins after the introduction, and if done well, it has many benefits.

A number of packers and distributors have solved the complex, expensive and challenging task of prepacking fixed weight portions. This represents a good brand delivery opportunity in a cheese trade that sells 93% of all cheese in packaged form, and I believe there will be a surge in specialist retail prepacks in 2017, as many retailers and food service outlets look to deliver localism.

Innovation is now back on the agenda big time, as all retailers seek point of difference. They in turn will lead this for their own ends via the product briefs they issue to many. Low prices have reduced risk taking and investment in ideas over the past 18 months, where only the power brands like Cathedral City have led real innovation, with most other innovation being on a small scale in independent makers and packers, generally via new product development. I see this accelerating in 2017, with some

original ideas in product and pack. Farm shops, farmers markets and speciality in food will still continue to be the shoppers' destination of choice, as larger retailers struggle to grasp the principles of this sector: where shopper buying decisions are more emotional than commercial; where product knowledge and food experience bypasses all the system-driven thinking; where local awareness and flexibility outpaces one-size-fits-all.

The wiser major retailers will take radical actions around their deli as costs mount, waste thrives and sales slip, and I see at least two of these being able to turn the situation steadily to its right advantage.

In the product stakes, super-premium Cheddar will continue to outpace the Cheddar market itself, despite all the supply challenge. Comté and Manchego show no sign of slowing down, and both hard and soft goat's cheese are making inroads. Halloumi will surely have another super summer and in late summer the lost twins of Red and White Fox should reach maturity and return.

Predicting the future has never been a science. Now, as well as milk, consumers and the financial health of the nation, politics, Europe, currency and alternative demand look so much more blurred than normal. Overall, though, 2017 should be a good year for most.

“ Innovation is now back on the agenda big time, as all retailers seek point of difference ”



JASON FISHER OF ANTHONY ROWCLIFFE & SON

“What's to come”

Let's start with the familiar and yearly trend - at the end of January when the dreaded credit card bills start to flood the doorsteps of consumers, there is a strong propensity for a shift in focus on cost and value of 'speciality' items.

A new year means a different mindset to eating and buying. This is not a new trend as we all know, but in 2017, will it pose more of a threat as it marries up with the scaremongering of Brexit?

The constant fear of Brexit and the Euro exchange rate will potentially not be the only impact on cheese prices in early 2017. We already have to consider that milk prices are currently rising and there is the threat of increased fuel costs. Not to rest on our laurels, I see there is an opportunity for artisanal UK cheese producers who can offer

a product point of difference with added value. This will see a shake-up in consumer facing range strategy and the procurement across the food sectors in the UK.

As the prices go up, wastage will be under the spotlight with retailers. In light of this, there is an opportunity for producers to support a reduction in wastage; reviewing and removing the 'risk' by adapting their cheese size for both deli and pre-pack. Unit sizes on speciality pre-pack cheese will be paramount as the end RSP needs to be competitive to drive volume. For artisanal pre-pack cheese producers, this may see a change in the way NPD is conceived as the consumer RSP must be the driving factor with the cheese size being built around this.

How do we protect ourselves against the bumpy road of 2017? NPD. The focus is on being innovative and relevant at the right price point. We need to

ensure the right product with the relevant proposition is available for consumers. Being mindful that the consumer spending sentiment will be wanting to spend less, the interesting juxtaposition will be that they do not necessarily want to compromise on quality and the choices in-store.

Putting aside the vital price point, what will be the other important factors that will influence consumers to spend or not to spend?

- Have the products been locally-sourced?
- Is it artisanal with relevant and interesting provenance?
- Does it offer a USP?
- What makes it interesting and different?

I believe product innovation needs to not only keep up with the speed of an ever-changing market but, where relevant, walk several steps ahead in terms of helping to help drive this change. Product innovation will need to resonate with the wider market changes and vulnerabilities. Never has it been so important to ensure consumers are being listened to and their needs met. The adoption of trends, which often change with little

warning frequently throughout the year, depending on the producer's response to budgeting and fear of economical game changers.

The key relationships to nurture and strengthen are with:

- Local producers
- Artisanal producers
- British suppliers
- British producers delving into more European-style cheeses
- Producers who can offer an ever-changing and innovative seasonal range

For future success, we need to grab the opportunities and embrace new, long term collaborations with partners, working in tandem for true NPD. Take the differing strengths and knowledge and integrate them into a range that meets and adapts to consumer trends. Never has there been such a time for the industry to be educated, aware and creative. The good news for consumers is that boundaries will be pushed and innovative and relevant NPD will be discovered. Ultimately, the desire for a wonderfully rich, luxurious piece of artisanal cheese that feeds the soul will never die!

“ Never has there been such a time for the industry to be educated, aware and creative ”

Cheese Talk

New retail perspectives from industry experts

News, opinion and comment from dairy insiders

Heart-shaped Cheeses Receive Valentine's Push

Somerset-based farm and cheesemaker Godminster is promoting its heart-shaped cheeses ahead of the Valentine's Day rush. The range consists of Vintage Organic Cheddar, Organic Brie and a Heart to Heart gift pack that includes both varieties.

Deborah Bradfield, head of sales said, "We see a rise in people snapping up our heart-shaped Vintage Organic Cheddar and Brie, whether that's in our Heart to Heart gift pack or as the single heart-shaped Vintage Organic Cheddar truckles, which are popular year-round. We often get feedback that it's nice to have an alternative to chocolates and Champagne, so we think people value having a little something quirky but delicious for their special someone!"

"The Heart to Heart gift pack really comes into its own around Valentine's Day, because it's made for sharing. Just add some of our Rosemary Water Biscuits and you've got a ready-made cheeseboard waiting for you!"

"We always suggest that tasters are a great way for retailers to get customers to switch up their regular purchases. We have a pack of samples ready-to-go that we offer to our traders, so stockists just need to let us know they want one when they phone up and order and then they can freely offer their customers tasters while they're browsing."



Harvey & Brockless Unveils New Range

The fine food wholesaler and distributor has launched six new additions to its collection, four of which reveal an emerging trend of miniature cheeses.

Working closely with artisan cheesemakers, Harvey & Brockless has developed a range of miniature versions of popular cheeses that are intended to refresh counter displays and sharing platters.

The range includes Rollright Mini by Kingstone Dairy, Cremet Mini by Sharpam, Edel de Cléron by Thomas A and Petit Munster by Hennart.

Other additions to the wholesaler's cheese catalogue are Charles Martell's Slack Ma Girdle, a new cheese made in the same way to

Stinking Bishop without undergoing the perry wash or beechwood banding, and Colston Bassett's Shropshire Blue, similar to Stilton with the addition of annatto.

Owen Davies, category manager at Harvey & Brockless said, "Mini cheeses are an ideal solution for retailers and chefs, as staff do not need to cut to order. As well as being convenient, they reduce wastage as they are designed to be consumed in one sitting."

"The mini cheeses are a neat package that deliver the same great taste as their bigger brothers. You can also create a memorable cheeseboard with much less fuss. We are thrilled to work closely with our suppliers on introducing innovation."

Consumers Swap Cheddar for Blue

Research by retail analysts Kantar Worldpanel has found sales of traditional Cheddar are down 4 per cent year-on-year, while blue cheese sales have increased by 8 per cent.

Despite this dip, Cheddar is still the largest section of the market, making up 53 per cent of all cheese sold, but research shows that shoppers are increasingly enjoying

blue and continental cheese.

Fraser McKeivitt, head of retail and consumer insight said, "Overall, the cheese market has increased in value by 0.6 per cent - this is an improvement on last year's decline of -1.1 per cent. Shoppers are buying more per trip and more often, but there has been a consistent decrease in the average price per kilo."

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PETER'S YARD



Mary Quicke has launched the Academy of Cheese to establish a professional accreditation programme for cheesemakers, retailers, chefs, distributors and cheese fans.

Mary's inspiration behind the idea came from witnessing how the Certified Cheese Professional scheme in America elevated the role of those in the cheese supply chain and wished to transfer this practise to the UK.

Academy of Cheese Launches

The courses are aimed to boost the understanding of those in the industry in order for cheese to be sold in optimum condition, mirroring the Wine & Spirit Education Trust's established framework.

Students will be able to sit level one of the programme from spring 2017 onwards, with the further structure of the course still in progress. Those who apply can climb from level one to four, which will be available from 2018. Completion of level four accredits members with a Master of Cheese title.

The Academy of Cheese was created with the support of key

members of the cheese industry, including Ros Windsor from Paxton & Whitfield and Charlie Turnbull of Turnbolls Cheesemongers.

Richard Paul, sourcing director of Bradburys said, "Bradburys is pleased to be sponsoring and associated with the Academy of Cheese. Having an industry-wide skills-based qualification will help raise the standards of everyone in cheese, from sellers to graders to makers. Our business has a long association with passion and knowledge for cheese, and helping to develop the next generation of experts is essential for our industry."

Norwegian Cheese Wins Big at WCA

Kraftkar, a blue cheese made by Norwegian producer Tingvollst, was awarded the titles of World Champion and Champion of Champions at the World Cheese Awards 2016.

Over 3,000 cheeses from 31 different countries were entered into the World Champion category, where 266 cheese experts graded the cheeses, giving Bronze, Silver, Gold and Super Gold awards to worthy entries. Kraftkar was awarded 71 points out of a possible 80 by the jury of 16 judges.

Kraftkar subsequently went on to win the first ever Champion of Champions award the following day, featuring a line-up of all previous World Champion winners. The title was awarded by an international panel of judges, with Ossau Iraty coming second and Le Gruyère AOP Premier Cru placed third.

Gunnar Waagen from Tingvollst said, "I have no words, this is marvellous news! We are a family-run farm and work long days to make our cheese. We get up early every day and go to bed very late to

make the best cheese we can, so to win this award, I am very proud."

Ingulf Galaaen, a fellow Norwegian cheesemaker who accepted the Champions of Champions award on Tingvollst's behalf said, "It was a very special day yesterday and Gunnar has already returned to Norway to make more cheese! This is another wonderful moment and a fantastic achievement for cheesemakers in Norway."



JUSTIN TUNSTALL
RETAIL
CONSULTANT



"Monogamy: overrated?"

How many partners have you had? If it is a small part of your business, it may be that you use just a single supplier. If it plays a major part, multiple suppliers may be needed to achieve the range that you want.

When I set up my shop, I leaned heavily on the advice of a couple of suppliers, both of whom spent time taking me through their ranges and making recommendations based on what they believed to be similar businesses. One even spent an entire day with me, helping set up, boosting confidence and demonstrating procedures that had worked for others. For the first fortnight I used these two exclusively. Both delivered via third party courier and we found the amount of packaging rather daunting to deal with in a small shop.

Other wholesalers heard that we had opened and pitched their catalogues. Many offered chilled delivery, meaning less packaging. Locally-based companies (with lower delivery costs to absorb) offered cheaper prices, improving margin. We also identified a couple of producers where we could sell sufficient volume to make direct buying (and collection) a workable solution. On the flip side, the chilled deliveries could only take place on fixed days, so we needed to have a stock buffer in case of demand spike. Thus those with 24 hour delivery remained vital as part of our supplier mix to enable top-ups when we had been exceptionally busy. Furthermore, we realised that the range we wanted still needed many quality lines that we could only source from a national supplier.

Suppliers that we tried and didn't use again tended to fall at the

following hurdles: difficult to order from; awkward or unreliable delivery times (goods left outside shop); poor back office (invoice queries and credit note blizzards taking up valuable time). We also discovered that some cheese suppliers were primarily focused on food service rather than retail – short shelf life goods were of limited use to us.

Concentrating our sourcing of cheese into just a few suppliers gave tangible benefits. In one instance we were able to secure additional discounts. When particular cheeses entered periods of short supply, we were able to secure good availability. We developed long-term relationships with our chosen suppliers that became partnerships. As a supplier got to know our trading pattern, they would make insightful suggestions, let us know of new cheeses that they were taking on and also pass on what they felt was happening in the broader market outside our particular trading area.

We realised that we had identified the right partners on the day that our chillers broke down and we had to dispose of all our stock. We placed restock orders with our two biggest partners just as soon as the electrician had given the nod that systems were functioning again. One made particular effort to recall their courier to collect, hours after the normal pick-up, and the other put on a special van delivery so that we had stock and were able to trade again the following day. I think that neither delivery was profitable for the suppliers, but their commitment more than lived up to the words of the marriage vow: "For better or worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health!"

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SOVEREIGN TERRITORY

As imported goods become a pricier prospect, could our British territorial cheeses be next in line to inherit a new following?

Anna Blewett investigates

No-one could ever claim that British territorial cheese is the most dynamic of markets. If getting onto customer trends and predicting market fluctuations gets you out of bed in the morning, you might find curating the territorials section of your counter as exciting as watching cheese ripen. But we live in interesting times, and even this most traditional of categories is feeling the wind of change.

More than just Marmite

You'll no doubt have talked yourself hoarse – with staff, suppliers and customers – about the various ramifications of Brexit: the likely direction of the Pound against the Euro, and the spectre of life outside the single market, the whole nine yards. And of course while we all watch our Twitter feeds and news

alerts to see how the chips fall as the UK departs the European Union, there are very real challenges in the here and now to grapple with.

But just as the drop in the value of sterling has unleashed a depressing series of price rises on imported goods, so has a silver lining appeared for British manufacturing. While you decide how much of the price increases could and should be passed on to your customers, your good old homegrown products may suddenly have gained a new lustre. “We have, because of the exchange rate, had to put up the price of our Continentals,” says Ros Windsor, managing director of Paxton & Whitfield. “They’re looking a lot more expensive alongside our British cheeses than in previous times, which is a great opportunity to sell more British cheeses.”

Not everyone agrees: “So far

as I’m concerned, Continental cheeses at the top end of the market have always been more affordable than their British counterparts, if there are such things,” says Tim Rowcliffe, chairman of Rowcliffe & Son. “That gap has definitely narrowed – prices of cheeses from the Eurozone have gone up dramatically by anything up to 10 or 12% – but hasn’t closed entirely. Sadly, I’m not sure that’s been a massive advantage to British farmhouse cheesemaking.” But while high quality Continental cheeses produced on a large scale are traditionally cheaper, Ros Windsor finds comparing niche, farmhouse cheeses made in small batches shows a positive effect in favour of UK makers. “Most of our Continental cheeses at the top end are made in small production. Because they’re the pinnacle of the

local market they’re comparable with the pinnacle of the UK market, and so the exchange rate has made them more expensive.”

Finding like-for-like comparisons is always a challenge. “Tim’s absolutely right that there has always been a bit of a chasm [between British and Continental cheeses],” says Charlie Turnbull, who runs Turnbulls Deli in Dorset, sits on the steering group for the Academy of Cheese and leads industry masterclasses. “The Europeans have always done a better job of doing large-scale production and maintaining quality. The chasm in this country is between huge production – cheaper cheese – and artisan, which is more expensive.”

Charlie believes prices of the UK’s farmhouse cheeses – territorials included – will

themselves be shaken up by the ‘Brexit effect’. “We’re net importers of milk,” he points out, “and lots of people in the UK are getting their milk from abroad, whether they know it or not. That imported milk is going to get more expensive, which will strengthen the hand of our farmers to get a better price. A dairy specialist I spoke to recently said milk prices might climb as much as 25% over the next three years, which is going to be scary. But if importing milk becomes trickier for the supermarkets then we’ll see a gentle drift towards UK production, which will stabilise the milk market. It’ll raise the prices but the stability will offset that rise and actually that’d be not a bad outcome.”

Taste and image

Of course, when it comes to any fine food category, price isn’t everything. Brand matters, and our British territorials carry considerable clout. When Bodnant Dairy in Conwy Valley added a traditional Caerphilly to its range of clothbound cow’s milk cheeses, it tapped into a heritage of cheesemaking which, although not local, could be appreciated by the customer. “A lot of cheeses now have new names,” starts Debbie Lee, Bodnant’s dairy

“When someone wants to try something new and really exciting I’ll pull out a piece of Lancashire; they’ll say ‘Wow! What’s that?!’”

sales manager. “For example, we have Aberwen, our own white farmhouse-style cheese. But we have to describe that product to people when they first come across it, whereas when you use a name like Traditional Welsh Caerphilly most people have a good idea what to expect. In terms of bringing your product to the customer you’re already halfway there.”

Taking on a heritage recipe, and going head-to-head with makers who have been refining production of that same cheese for generations, could be seen as a stiff challenge. “We view it as an opportunity,” says Debbie. “We’re using a single milk supply from our local herd to make that cheese to a traditional recipe, so the unique character comes from the raw materials and our production methods. It’s up to the customer to make a decision, either based on locality or on flavour profile. We’ve just won three gold stars from the Great Taste Awards so we’re hoping we’re up there on the top at the moment.”

But are a customer’s pre-conceived expectations of a territorial cheese a help or a hindrance? Okay, a well-informed shopper used to buying quality will be primed to pay for excellent artisan territorial cheeses, but what about that occasional Saturday walk-in who thinks ‘I know that cheese – I buy it for £7 a kilo at Tesco’? “Actually, when you get them to sample a proper handmade cheese they’re blown away,” says Ros. “The differences are so huge they think it’s amazing.”

David Lockwood of Neals Yard Dairy agrees that quality British territorial cheeses will always shine. In fact, he’s a one-man cheerleading team for our native regional recipes. “For me, they are the foundation of our dairy,” says David. “The

new wave cheesemakers are interesting, and are having fun with the Continental-style cheeses; I’m glad they’re making them. But by the same token, Cheddar, Stilton, Lancashire and Cheshire... They’re just amazing for showing off the flavours that you find in milk. And the textures that come from them are amazing. It’s pretty much unique to the British Isles, to have those styles of cheese.”

Hyper locality

“The traditional view is you can judge a cheesemonger by the quality of his territorials,” says Charlie Turnbull. “If he doesn’t know about that then he doesn’t know about cheese. I think that’s a little old fashioned now, but it’s still relevant. When I talk to cheesemongers in Lancashire or Yorkshire, the demand is for quality local. That might be an old brand like a Wensleydale or it might be a new cheese, but it seems to me people want a proportion of the cheese counter to have a high degree of locality. It might be 20 or 30%, but they have to have strong local draw. That’s where territorials are going – people want cheeses from the same county. The heritage element is less important to people nowadays. Double or Single Gloucester sells very well in Gloucestershire. It’s as simple as that.”

“I’d draw a contrast between our London and regional shops,” says Ros, on the customer preference for locality. “In our regionals I think a number of people do like to buy from the locality; certainly in our Bath shop we sell a lot more Cheddar than we do proportionally in our other shops, and our Stratford shop sells more cheese from the Midlands. But in London I don’t find that at all.”

For Belton Cheese in

Whitchurch, working with suppliers in a small local radius – using milk from nearby family farms, Cheshire salt, and labels printed in the region – brings a strong local provenance to a full range of territorial recipes. “Our speciality is Cheshire,” says marketing manager Alison Taylor, “but we pride ourselves on making cheeses true to type. Quality is absolutely at the heart of the business, so although we have some automation our methods are very traditional and the skill of the cheesemaker is paramount.”

For Alison, the true excellence of our territorials is a bigger factor than current price advantages. “The issue, particularly with the crumbly territorials, is that it tends to be older people who have grown up with a local speciality – Wensleydale, Cheshire, Lancashire, whichever part of the country you’re in. And younger people need education. Cheddar is the number one-selling cheese in the UK, but with the other territorials education is needed, and Britishness of these recipes is a great focus. Look at a cheese like Cheshire: it’s very Feta-like but has less salt so there’s all the versatility but it’s healthier.”

David Lockwood sees the benefits of territorials too. “It’s kinda like a slow-fermented sourdough bread versus commercial yeast bread. With slow-fermented you’re tasting all this extra stuff, and that’s so much of what territorials are about. It’s a slow make, suited to this climate, that highlights the flavours and textures so well. Is it ‘just’ the traditional cheese that will always be a part of the counter? Well yeah, but even though they haven’t changed, the makers are just working so hard to bring out better flavours and textures. I find it fascinating. I don’t work in the shop that often but when I do, and someone wants to try something new and really exciting, I’ll pull out a piece of Lancashire. They’ll say ‘Wow! What’s that?’ and I say ‘Lancashire!’ They’re like ‘No way!’ It’s just so good and they don’t expect it.”



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THE EXPANSION FACTOR

How can a café, takeaway service or gift shop add value and what should be considered?

John Bensalhia reports

Home sweet home can be a source of great value. A lick of paint here, a new carpet there, and in some cases, an extended kitchen or brand new attic room. Refurbishment and expansion are not only good ideas for getting ahead on the property ladder, they are also two key watchwords in the case of retail business.

By either refurbishing the building or adding the likes of a café, takeaway service or gift shop, retail businesses are creating extra value and interest for customers. Heidi Easton, marketing manager at the Shop and Display Equipment Association (SDEA), says that the key benefits of such initiatives would be increased revenue and footfall, both working in unison to propel the brand forwards.

"In today's increasingly competitive marketplace, differentiation is key, so there is every reason to incorporate a food, drink or gift offer. Customers love that little bit extra, something new and exciting! Whether that is a gourmet coffee and cake café or a dazzling delicatessen, the results are the same; increased customer dwell time and loyalty leads to the retailer in question becoming a destination in its own right, and one that will be revisited time and again."

"There has been a growing increase in retail land to have multi-concept businesses all underneath one roof," says Gerry Moss, retail development manager at WBC. "Whether this dual retail model is one business acting as two fractions or two respective businesses sharing a singular space, the results usually promote and create dynamic retail



BECKWORTH EMPORIUM, COURTESY OF CREATEPOSE

experiences for customers."

Gerry says that there are three key benefits of a dual concept business: potential cross pollinating of product and brand identity, enhanced customer experience and bigger opportunities for sales and higher spends.

"Years ago, I was the food buyer for Flaneur Food Hall," adds Gerry. "This once fashionable food hotspot featured a deli nestled within an upmarket restaurant. Customers who dined there were inspired and tempted to purchase additional items from the radiating food hall based on their dining experience. This innovative set up became an ingredient-led food journey, in terms of what was on the menu and how it related to boost sales within the food hall. The two concepts successfully played off one another, creating a unique eating and an inspirational shopping experience."

Cost effective

"The main benefit of expanding a retail business is increased



WBC'S BRIX MODULAR DISPLAY IN ACTION

turnover," says Createpose director Ken Corsie.

"The key is looking at the project with a holistic approach from the beginning and preparing in detail, asking yourself questions about available budget and the best ways to spend investment. What is your product offer going to be? Always remember to look at your direct competitors and see what is working for them.



VITAL GUIDELINES

Gerry Moss of WBC explains that in three key areas (offering, ambience and service), a number of vital guidelines apply:

"For offering, only use the best ingredients no matter what, keep menus seasonal and concise, and have portion sizes that only just leave a customer wanting more.

"In the case of ambience, have a clean, well-lit place with no unnecessary noise pollution, plus sufficient, comfortable seating and tables. Keep art or flower arrangements to a minimum and have well looked after lavatories with excellent facilities.

"Meanwhile, service should facilitate but not dominate the experience, and should inspire and inform rather than be rushed or negligent."

financial issues when considering expansion: waste ("which can be a huge financial issue in terms of expansion"), theft ("both from the customer side as well as the house side of a business"), and maintenance and staffing ("Finding and more importantly keeping staff is a financial consideration in regards to expansion").

Top quality

A vital element of any food-based expansion is that quality is king. "Whatever the product, it should be good quality," says Heidi Easton. "Fresh food with 'homemade' dishes are being favoured, and ground coffees and loose leaf teas with additional flavours are extremely popular right now. Coffee chains such as Costa Coffee and Starbucks regularly offer unusual and seasonal combinations, especially during

What is successful? But be sure to differentiate your offer and be individual. Ensure that you have looked closely at the payback period within which you will recoup your initial investment and turn this into profitability as quickly as you can."

A cost-effective, enduring investment with respect to developing a new look and improving space or display capabilities is the BRIX Modular Display System.

"We developed BRIX in response to demand from retailers looking for something different from the traditional shop fit," says Gerry Moss. "It has exceeded all our expectations with its broad appeal across a range of retail and hospitality sectors. Over the years, we've recognised that the conventional static shop fit not only required a large initial outlay, but it was specific to that retail unit alone. BRIX allows complete versatility, and in the competitive high street market, customers expect an ever-changing, fluid and interactive customer experience and environment. BRIX delivers on all these fronts."

Gerry adds that there are four

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SDEA'S MODERN APPROACH

autumn and winter. The same level of innovation and excellence can also be applied to delicatessen, farm stores, independent convenience stores and such like; locally-sourced produce, herbal and spice infusions and an element of surprise delight and add to the appeal every time.”

Gerry Moss says that the best food will result in customer interest. “Being from the food world myself, I am a purist when it comes to defining what makes a great café or deli. ‘Create or source the very best food and they will come’ has always been a mantra I have subscribed to. In a world where mediocrity reigns, food customers are devout when eateries or delis inspire us with craft and or product selections.”

Take a good look

When it comes to the retail interior of the new café or gift store, Heidi Easton says that a clean, fuss-free look is recommended. “There are many options available but essentially, in order to create a good store, the design should be clean and uncluttered. A mix of small tables and chairs, comfy sofas and coffee tables within a café invite the customer to sit down and relax. A streamlined, neatly merchandised shop encourages the customer to browse the entire product range at leisure. Nowadays, provided the overall look is cohesive in colour, design and materials, or entirely uncoordinated chintz (if this is the look you are aiming for), the store will attract new customers.”

“Other ideas that could be

considered in a new or revamped store include perimeter shelving that are similar in look and feel to the café tables and chairs. These can be used to good effect, showcasing a range of off-site consumption goods for the customer: perhaps sampled in-store and then packaged to takeaway. A well-designed glass counter used to showcase cakes, pastries and other delicacies, ideally placed within full view of passers-by, is vital; it will tempt customers in and help increase individual spend. There should also be plenty of room for customers to move around and space set aside for queuing at peak times.”

Lighting also plays a crucial role in determining the success of a store. “You may decide on an ultra sleek and modern café design and therefore require blindingly, bright neon light to set off your stark interior with maximum effect: great in a cosmopolitan city,” says Heidi Easton. “Or, you may prefer a more subdued effect with a mixture of pendant, wall and individual spot lights to create a warm and inviting interior in a country shop. Whatever your choice, lighting is a great way to create ambience and add drama within any environment.”

Business websites and social media (such as an Instagram account) means that shops can feature photographs of meals, gifts or displays. This in turn can encourage customers to take photos themselves and share them on social media with their friends.

By contrast, some of the good old-fashioned methods are also effective. “Some of the simplest props work well,” says Ken Corsie. “Old apple boxes are great for all types of products large and small, and whole stores can be built out of them. We used this technique for the Beckworth Emporium gift department. Use theming and props to bring together a particular look and feel, colour co-ordinate all furniture and lighting, and use your POS and menus to advertise your offer, then encourage people to take them away with them.”

Browser becomes buyer

Gerry Moss says that a main reason for refurbishment will be to convert a browser into a buyer. “Take a look at how you communicate with your customers through in-store displays. When you’re busy serving other customers or managing other tasks, it can be hard to reach every shopper that walks through the door. Part of a refurbishment can include reassessing these areas. Can your customer clearly see the prices? Can they see the ‘why-to-buy’? From simple messages written by hand on blackboards to more complex merchandising displays, the point of all POS and signage is to give customers just the right amount of information to encourage them to buy, and buy now! The best advice is keep it simple and do it well.”

In addition to the design, layout and look of the refurbished or expanded area, the product offer is important for a successful café or gift shop. Ken Corsie comments: “Look at the café or gift shop as an extension of your existing food or retail offer, and consider how you can cross-sell products. For instance, always refer back to the café for products that you are selling in-store for customers to purchase on the way out to eat at home.”

Naming local suppliers on your café menu and referring to the provenance of products are also ways of engaging customers. “Know your customers and their spending habits, ensure that your pricing reflects their expectations, and research this on a regular basis,” says Ken. “Find out which are your hero products and why they are popular. Support these with your other products, but also change your menu or products on a seasonal basis. Keep your brand and offers at all times FRESH: Fun, Relevant, Engaging, Social and Helpful.”

“This will help with customer engagement and keep them wanting and looking for more, this will build long term customer loyalty. Look at the customer as a real relationship and keep it interesting and new at all times. Customers are looking for engagement, and the brands that get it right means the difference between a single sale and a loyal, lifelong customer.”

“There are three key benefits of a dual concept business: potential cross pollinating of product and brand identity, enhanced customer experience, and bigger opportunities for sales and higher spends”

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soulfulfood.com

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Championing everything herbalicious, A Little Bit is an exciting range that brings a splash of colour to shelves. Delivering an aromatic and flavoursome punch, each recipe is made exclusively with fresh herbs and all natural ingredients to capture a just-picked taste. The latest addition to the luscious line up is a herby twist on a classic - Tomato & Rosemary Ketchup. This joins four original dressings; Red Onion & Parsley, Balsamic & Thyme, Raspberry & Mint and Lemon & Tarragon which are equally versatile as dips or marinades. The range is completed by Spicy Sage Pasta Sauce with more developments in the pipeline. Utilising the incredible properties of our green, leafy friends, A Little Bit has created something tasty and fun to transform the simplest dishes. Gluten-free and Vegetarian Society-approved, why not try for yourself and make your condiment selection a little bit more exciting. A Little Bit of this. A Little Bit of that. A whole lot of herbs. A whole lot of sales!

alittlebit.co.uk

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Riverside Lifestyle

Bonilla a la Vista from Riverside Lifestyle is a natural crisp with no additives, gluten-free with the best crunch ever, and totally irresistible once tasted. The crisps are available in three bag sizes: 50g individual bags, 150g sharing bags and 300g family bags as well as the iconic 500g tin for every party occasion - they're just very cool to have on shelves! Each bag is made with two varieties of the very best potatoes which are finely cut and cooked in cold-pressed olive oil - each crisp is hand-selected for perfection and lightly sea-salted before packing. The shelf life is long as we have the very best sealed packaging and the tins keep fresh for up to 12 months! We'd also be happy to send a 500g tin to any stockist for a small delivery cost of £10. Bonilla crisps are cooked to perfection in Galicia in Northern Spain.

riversidelifestyle.co.uk

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pellinicaffe.com

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williescacao.com

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chashtea.co.uk

FREE SAMPLE TEA TASTING PACK LIMITED TO 150!



The Shropshire Spice Company

The Shropshire Spice Company has just added three new recipes to its gluten-free 'So Simple' herb and spice blend range. The latest recipes are Jambalaya, Stroganoff and Chilli, which have been created for people who love home-cooked food but don't have the time to source a long list of ingredients. There are nine products in the range, with the original range including three curries; Swahili African Curry, Goan Xacutti Curry and Indian Keema. The trusted favourites Classic Italian blend, Rich Beef Casserole and Chicken Casserole add to these great store cupboard essentials. Designed for broad appeal, none are too hot or spicy and make great family meals in minutes. As well as gluten-free, the recipes have no artificial additives, flavourings or colourings!

shropshire-spice.co.uk

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Franklin & Sons is a range of award-winning crafted soft drinks, tonics and mixers, combining unique ingredients that deliver a deliciously different refreshing taste. Franklins' products were first introduced in 1886 when the three Franklin brothers began selling their handcrafted range of soft drinks in Rickmansworth, London. Today, the high quality range has combined heritage and specially sourced ingredients to reintroduce the classic taste of Franklins. This all-natural range features no artificial colours or flavours and absolutely no sweeteners or preservatives. These are expertly crafted and packaged in a bespoke 275ml & 750ml glass bottles that celebrates the brand's London heritage.

franklinandsons.co.uk

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Eat Natural Protein Packed offers the tastiest solution for the 'active ones' amongst us this New Year. A simple, delicious, crunchy combination of peanuts, coconut, soya crispies, honey and decadent dark chocolate chunks for a bit of a treat. What's more it contains a whopping 10g of protein per bar. Like all Eat Natural bars, it's made pretty much by hand at their Makery in Essex, and just as you've come to expect, contains no artificial flavours, colours or preservatives. It's gluten-free and OK for veggies.

eatnatural.co.uk

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SEAWEED

That green slimy stuff you slipped on in Cornwall last August is the latest superfood, says Sally-Jayne Wright. It's everywhere from upmarket restaurants, to sandwich chains, to supermarkets

REALLY? SEAWEED?

Yes, Jamie Oliver is a huge fan and chef Nathan Outlaw likes to make a seaweed, bacon and samphire side dish to go with razor clams and ling.

At Pret a Manger there's miso soup with wakame and kelp, at Marks and Spencer Stornoway Scottish seaweed oatcakes, and you'll find fresh kombu seaweed for sale in season on over 100 Waitrose fish counters.

I'VE HEARD OF LAVERBREAD...

Just a drop in the ocean. There are about 600 edible seaweeds around our shores and numerous ways to use them. From Cornwall to Ireland to the Outer Hebrides, food entrepreneurs are harvesting dulse, kelp, wakame, laverbread, sea spaghetti and shony. Kombu from the kelp family is a smooth tasting, umami-rich brown seaweed which is used to make dashi. Shony is a blend

of seaweeds which can be sprinkled on eggs, salads, pasta and rice or used to coat chicken and fish. Nori is roasted laverbread usually found in snacks. Never mind courgetti, how about sea spaghetti? Add to pasta or boil it up alone for a gluten-free fix.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE TREND?

The popularity of foraging, clean eating and sushi bars have all played a part. Plus, seaweed is packed with calcium, iodine, iron, protein and Vitamin C. Had sailors eaten the seaweed round their ships, they might not have suffered scurvy. Seaweed can serve as a salt substitute and replace some of the salt in bread,

butter and sausages. Seaweed butter with fish is a classic and vegans can use powdered seaweeds such as smoky dulse where they'd use nutritional yeast for oomph such as over popcorn. Ecologists like seaweed because it's easy to grow (no watering or agricultural land needed) and could feed the planet.

WHERE IS THE TREND MOST SUCCESSFUL?

I like Cavi-art - a tasty faux caviar ideal for vegan canapes and garnishes and made in Denmark. Buy the black jars. I also like seaweed as a vitamin and mineral-laden snack. Sushi chain Itsu sold 2.5m packs of seaweed thins last year. I tasted Selwyn's sea salt and vinegar seaweed snack and relished its crisp, paper-thin texture, umami flavour and aftertaste. I liked it even better when I clocked the calorie count. Just 11 calories in one 4g packet, about £1. Seaweed products make good presents for foodies. The Pembrokeshire delicatessen, Wise Buys, introduced a £55 sea hamper in 2015 which includes mermaid confetti, Welshman's caviar and Parson's (tinned) laverbread, and it's selling well.

SHOULD I STOCK UP BIG-TIME?

Yes and no. The biggest challenge for customers is knowing what to do with it. Joe Morton-Clark of the Cornish Seaweed Company said: "People are a bit afraid. Flaked varieties of seaweed do best because they are easy-to-use and versatile and cooks are familiar with the idea of sprinkling on flavour." Their sea salad, a colourful mix of dulse, seagreens and nori is their best-seller, selling twice as much as sea spaghetti. He concedes that many seaweed gifts may never make it out of the cupboard. So offer recipes. Arrange sampling. As another challenge is the strong, acquired taste, you may do better with milder tasting seaweeds like sea spaghetti.

WILL IT CATCH ON?

Tricky. Waitrose will be selling fresh kombu again come April but you won't find Dickson's seaweed sausages at Asda, perhaps because customers simply didn't fancy the idea. But then raw fish and kale smoothies were once unthinkable. Give it a go.

“ Ecologists like seaweed because it's easy to grow (no watering or agricultural land needed) and could feed the planet ”

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Whether you're gorging on genuine Aberdeenshire beef, wild game plucked from the highlands (or the lowlands) or delicately-smoked salmon from a traditional smokehouse, or quaffing a delicious craft brew, the varied nature of Scottish cuisine is world renowned and recognised as brimming with quality. The spectrum of food and drink is as diverse and beautiful as the picturesque Scottish landscape.

The reputation of Scottish food isn't going unnoticed. In fact, trade in Scotch whisky – the UK's biggest food and drink export – grew by 3.1% during the first half of 2016. Environment secretary Andrea Leadsom has stated that this is fuelled by an incredible demand in India, where exports have risen by a

From impeccable single malts to Arbroath smokies, Scottish food and drink is internationally celebrated. We meet the faces that are making the industry tick

record 41%. To put that into context, the equivalent of 533 million bottles were shipped overseas in the first half of 2016, up from 517 million bottles in the first half of 2015.

This surge in demand doesn't stop at whisky, either. In 2015 the Scottish aquaculture industry was worth £1.86 billion, rocketing to its highest-ever figure, according to a survey conducted by Scottish Fish Farm Production. Former environment minister Aileen

McLeod predicted that, "If the industry's sustainable growth targets, supported by the Scottish government, are met, this value will rise to well over £2 billion a year and support 10,000 jobs across Scotland by 2020."

It's not just industry behemoths that propel Scottish food and drink. The nation's natural larder provides the foundation for a multitude of products that shouldn't be considered a flash in the pan when compared to the reverence single malts and smoked salmon enjoy. Scotland's farm shops and delicatessen are filled head-to-toe with exquisite fruit and vegetables, cheesemakers (and mongers) are setting up shop at a speedy rate, craft beer is widely adored (consider BrewDog, the Aberdeenshire brewery that's currently conquering the world), haggis is a treasured delicacy, and that's just to name a couple of flourishing products and sectors.

Scottish-sourced

Sarah Yearsley is the owner of The Scottish Deli, which operates sites in Dunkeld and Pitlochry in Perthshire. Sarah understands the allure of Scottish-made food and drink, and

is rightly proud of the products she sources and sells. She says, "Being based in Highland Perthshire means that our shops have an amazing natural larder on their doorstep and this is mirrored in the range of delicious produce on our shelves. Smoked salmon, honey, venison, craft beers, berries, mushrooms and fungi are just a few of The Scottish Deli's favourites." Sarah believes that this variety of produce naturally influences the perception of Scottish food, explaining, "I think people have realised that the kind of quality they find in a great Scotch whisky, beautiful smoked salmon or venison is to be found across a range of lovely

Scottish food. It's great to see how people are really appreciating Scottish food nowadays – we've definitely moved on from being seen as the home of the deep-fried Mars bar."

And the sectors that are currently seeing an influx of interest? "Tea grown in Scotland is a real area of growth and something we need to get into quickly! The Wee Tea Company seem to be going from strength-to-strength. Craft gin continues to be an exciting and fast-moving area – we are loving Zesty Citrus Gin, which is a bright, citrusy gin from a newly-opened distillery in Perthshire." Sarah continues, "A relatively new addition to our shelves is The Rookery Craft Mead, a fresh take on a really ancient drink with exciting flavours. Charlotte Flower Chocolate continues to offer a lovely range of artisan-produced chocolate with innovative flavours that follow the seasons using locally-foraged ingredients."



SCOTLAND'S BREATHTAKING LANDSCAPE IS HOME TO A RICH SELECTION OF FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCERS

“It's great to see how people are really appreciating Scottish food nowadays – we've definitely moved on from being seen as the home of the deep-fried Mars bar”

RETAILER RECOMMENDED...



Sarah Yearsley, owner of The Scottish Deli, shares its most popular traditional products:

HAGGIS:

We sell the very best MacSween haggis and find that both the veggie and meat versions sell really well year-round, as well as on the run-up to St Andrew's Day and Burns Night. We also sell lots of canned Stahly Haggis, which is popular with non-UK customers who want to take some back on the plane.

DUNKELD SMOKED SALMON:

Smoked just a stone's throw from our Dunkeld deli, it's justifiably sought-after by locals and visitors alike. The quality is fantastic and it brings a touch of luxury to special occasions.

KENMORE BAKERY SHORTBREAD AND TABLET:

With a large proportion of our customers in the summer being

visitors to the area, we find that locally-made shortbread sells well. As well as proving a hit with our international customers, we find that tablet has a real nostalgic resonance with people who remember how their grannies made it.

CHARLES MCCLEOD'S STORNOWAY BLACK PUDDING:

Now classed as a superfood, we find that people will go the extra mile to seek out the very best black pud.

KINTYRE APPLESMOKE CHEDDAR:

A creamy mature Cheddar that is traditionally smoked at a Campbeltown smokehouse over apple wood chips.

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great taste 2015
great taste 2015

THE CRESS CO

Fife-based fine food distributor The Cress Co sources brands from around the world to offer retailers something different, and importantly, products that show strong sales. As well as an ever-expanding collection of ambient lines, there is also a dedicated catalogue for an extensive chilled range, and retailers can take advantage of a low minimum order of just £125. The Cress Co is expanding and has recruited an account manager to service retailers in the south east of England. Another southern location will open in early 2017 to fulfil deliveries across the UK using liveried vehicles.
thecressco.co.uk

**THE HEBRIDEAN TEA STORE**

Western Scotland's only speciality tea and coffee shop, The Hebridean Tea Store is a treasure trove of award-winning teas, gourmet coffees, unique gifts and luxuriant confectionery. A small family business, it stocks a huge array of tea blends – some that you won't find anywhere else in the world. These include the shop's Hebridean range, which are unique blends inspired by the beauty and grandeur of the Hebrides. The store can handle any size of order and deliver goods quickly and securely. All teas are loose and packed on the day they are delivered to ensure they are as fresh as possible.
hebrideanteastore.scot

**INVERAWE SMOKEHOUSES**

Robert and Rosie Campbell-Preston began creating their smoked fish in Inverawe back in 1974. Taking over the reins, their son Patrick is continuing the legacy to deliver Inverawe's signature deep, smooth and smokey flavours which can only be achieved by slow-smoking in hand-built, old-style kilns. The award-winning and Royal Warrant holding company does nothing by halves; each side can take 48 hours to perfect, allowing cool smoke from hand-tended oak log fires to do their work. There are no times, ovens or mechanical processes, just oak smoke, expert hand and time; the results speak for themselves.
smokedsalmon.co.uk

**INDUSTRY INSIGHT...**

James Withers, chief executive of Scotland Food & Drink, reflects on the success of the industry and looks to the future

The Scottish food and drink industry has come a long way in the last 10 years from static growth. It is now one of the best performing sectors in Scotland's economy.

In 2016, the industry reached new heights as a new record annual turnover of £14.4bn was announced – a rise of 40% in the industry's value since 2007 – as was confirmation that our manufacturing growth rate is still twice the UK average: 43% compared to 21%.

Achieving these figures is remarkable and points to something very different happening in Scotland in terms of innovation and collaboration. We are working to cement our status as a Land of Food and Drink, and as the annual turnover of the industry increases so does our reputation.

Whilst pausing to reflect on success is important, how we move forward, how we tackle the challenges in front of us and how we exploit emerging opportunities is the discussion we're now facing.

Scotland Food & Drink is an industry-led organisation and we work closely with a membership of 360 companies and organisations of all sizes and specialities.

We are an industry body, but at our heart we're an alliance of both the public sector and industry stakeholders, known as the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership. Together, the partnership is currently working on a new strategy which will map our course to 2030. This strategy will be launched in spring 2017.

Our new 2030 strategy needs to

look at how we create an environment for continued success for individual food and drink companies everywhere. If we succeed, we will ensure that food and drink continues to underpin Scotland's economic future.

Celebrating the success of food and drink is central to what we do. The annual Scotland Food & Drink Excellence Awards recognise this success, celebrating the best products, business practice and individuals that make Scotland a Land of Food and Drink. The awards highlight the strength of our industry, the wealth of talent and skill countrywide across all sectors, as well as our world leading expertise and innovation in the production of premium food and drink.

2017's Scotland Food & Drink Excellence Awards open for entries in January 2017 and the awards ceremony and dinner will take place on the 18th of May in Edinburgh. With previous year's tickets sold out after two weeks on sale, 800 people from across the industry are expected to attend.

foodanddrink.scot

“ We do our utmost to support local suppliers, whose produce is influenced strongly by the picturesque environment it comes from ”

Garry Kennedy, buyer at House of Bruar, believes the future is bright for Scottish food and is proud to reflect this in the shop's offering:

“The House of Bruar's Food Hall is brimming with products of the highest quality and we take great effort in getting to know our suppliers' influences, aspirations and backgrounds before placing an item on our shelves. Both aspects are vitally important to our business, and Scotland possesses fantastic conditions for food and drink producers to be able to master them, something that I am sure resonates with our loyal customers.

“We are rigorous in our selection process, examining every detail about the product and producer before listing. Provenance is a

central aspect to this practice, and we do our utmost to support local suppliers, whose produce is influenced strongly by the picturesque environment it comes from. Our wonderful staff, many of whom are local to the surrounding area, are heavily supportive of those

small businesses located near our store, something that ignites their enthusiasm even further when conversing about food and drink items with our visitors.

“It is no secret that the Scottish spirits industry is thriving at the moment, particularly gin, where our climate allows for a series of native botanicals to prosper and complement the on-trend tipples. There is also a growing appreciation for malt whisky. Individuals are becoming more knowledgeable about their dram and are experimenting with the peatiest whiskies that Islay and Scotland's west coast has to offer. The surge in popularity will be fascinating to observe as consumers' palates become increasingly sophisticated.

“Century-old images of traditional, masterfully-built and aesthetically glorious cities combined with the raw, untouched and breathtaking scenes of the mountainous Highlands have given Scotland a romantic identity. It is that perception that has heightened consumer curiosity in recent years about our nation, and I believe it has helped give Scotland's excellent produce its well deserved platform to flourish. We offer a mail order service for those unfortunate enough to be unable to visit us. The buying team and I work tirelessly to select the finest produce to be placed in beautiful wicker hamper baskets before posting them all over the world.

“Our smoked fish and meat counter has become progressively popular over the years. Indeed, many of the suppliers we list, like Inverawe Smokehouse, Rannoch Smokery and Macsween of Edinburgh, have been with us for decades. Building strong direct relationships with producers is central to our values at the food hall. Working with them to achieve the excellent results is best for both parties and an approach that we are particularly proud of.





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A GROWING CULTURE

With Scottish cheesemaking on the rise, we ask whether it's high time it receives the praise it deserves beyond the border

It's not often that you walk into a delicatessen based south of the border and encounter a designated Scottish cheese section. But this era of under-representation is drawing to a close, in part due to a raft of noteworthy cheeses being made by farmhouse and artisan producers receiving more recognition.

With Scotland well-suited to cheesemaking due to its preferable climate and geography, it's no wonder why its cheesemaking scene is turning heads. Taste of Scotland states that Cheddar currently accounts for 70 – 80% of the nation's total output, but there are plenty of delectable blue, hard, washed-rind and Bries being made by communities of dedicated cheesemakers.

Take Cambus O'May creamery's eponymous cheese, a unique, handmade, hard variety with a

distinctive marbled effect that is noticeable when the cheese is cut. It has strong dairy and rustic mountain flavours coupled with a creamy texture. This is just one fine example of cheese that typify the characteristics of Caledonian

cheese. With main creameries located in Locherbie, Stranraer and Campbeltown, as well as on the islands of Bute, Arran, Islay, Mull, Gigha and Orkney, the Scottish cheesemaking scene is a rich tapestry of variety and intrigue.



CHEESE TALK...



Jane Stewart, owner of St Andrews Farmhouse Cheese and chair of the Fine Cheesemakers of Scotland, explains the charm of Scottish cheese

The Fine Cheesemakers of Scotland is a group of 20 cheesemakers, plus wholesalers, environmental health officers and other interested parties. It's a good mix of people keen to promote Scottish cheese, learn more about cheesemaking, network and generally raise awareness of the fantastic range of artisan cheese now available north of the border.

As time went on, sometimes we felt a bit isolated, and we believed that Scottish cheese was not getting the publicity that it should. When you go down south there's not usually a lot of Scottish cheese on offer; we wanted to get together to promote ourselves and raise awareness of Scottish cheese.

When it comes to support and training sessions, a lot of things happen down in England, which is a long way to travel, so we thought it could be good to run some technical events up here where we could address certain issues that are of concern to us in Scotland.

I think Scottish cheesemaking is currently positive, enthusiastic, determined and proud. I know of a couple of people who are about to start out in cheesemaking – it's something that's definitely growing in Scotland. Watch this space, as there's going to be more cheese being made here going forward!

Scotland has fantastic Cheddars, crumbles, blues, washed-rind, Gouda-style, flavour-added – we have most styles of cheese covered, all from cow's, sheep's and goat's milk. There are lots of restaurants and hotels featuring Scottish

cheeseboard on their menus. Every cheese is unique to its area; the diet of the animal and climate all play a part. I think that's particularly the case with raw milk cheese – the milk gives the cheese unique properties that make it special to its particular area.

If you came to Scotland for a Cheddar taste tour, you would have plenty of places to stop for delicious

varieties. We've got the Blarliath Tain Truckle, the Dunlop-style Cheddars that are made by Connage Highland Dairy, and my own St Andrews Cheddar made in the east of Fife. Travel down west and you'll find the wonderful Barweys and Mull Cheddars. Every single one of these examples are unique. They're all a Cheddar-style, but you can have each one on a cheeseboard and you'll discover different textures, flavours and colours.

I think that English and Welsh delis and farm shops should have a Scottish section, not one poor piece of cheese on its own because it happens to be the one most people have heard of. They're not just for Burns Night, but for all year round!

BARWEYS DAIRY

Tricia Bey makes her award-winning cheese from the unpasteurised milk of her herd of pedigree Ayrshire cows. Barweys is situated in South Ayrshire, just five miles from the Atlantic, where the warm and wet climate results in exceptionally lush grass that is ideal for cattle. Tricia's traditional, handmade Cheddar is matured for 12 to 14 months to develop rich, nutty and caramel flavours. Perfect for a Burns supper cheeseboard, it's made just two miles from where Robert Burns' mother was born – she even had a few Ayrshire cows herself!

barweysdairy.co.uk



STAG BAKERIES

Stag's baking heritage on the beautifully unspoiled Outer Hebridean island of Lewis stretches back to 1885, and although the bakery is now modern, many things have not changed since those early days. Heritage, traditional recipes and time-honoured methods are still at the heart of the artisan bakery and the award-winning products it makes. The acclaimed Seaweed Collection, traditional Scottish Water Biscuits, Oatcakes and Scottish Cheese Straws reflect the provenance of the bakery. New product development is at the heart of the brand with new ranges planned to launch in 2017.

stagbakeries.co.uk



UNCLE ROY'S

Winners of 41 international awards, Uncle Roy's Comestible Concoctions started life as a result of Roy's experiences running the Moffat-based delicatessen Harvest Time, which was judged to be the best in Scotland. Starting with the uniquely mild and mellow Moffat Mustard, the ranges have grown to hundreds of products, including condiments, preserves, oils, smoked ingredients, edible flowers and a vast array of natural flavours. The recent move to Ayr, and the consequent management injection, will ensure further innovation and expansion of interesting, and above all, tasty products.

uncleroys.co.uk



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RAISING THE BAR

Whisky is a key component of the Scottish drink industry, but gin and craft beer are currently giving it a run for its money

Graeme Mackay from Glasgow's specialist shop **The Good Spirits Co.** raises a glass to the innovators of Scottish drink:

Whisky

We do particularly well with single malts. Glendronach 15 Year Old was our top-seller by some margin until it disappeared, but it has been replaced by Glendronach 12 Year Old. We also see a lot of interest in our range of independent bottlings

from the likes of Douglas Laing, Carn Mor and Creative Whisky Co. Something which these all have in common is a focus on quality, so no added colouring, no chill filtration and release lots of specific details on the production methods. I think that this is a bit of a backlash to the recent move towards non-age statement, marketing-led whiskies we are seeing in the industry.

We have always been vocal supporters of Springbank Distillery in Campbeltown, which is one of the

last truly independent distilleries in the country. We love its eccentric yet traditional approach and would love to see more companies following its example. The Isle of Arran Distillery is a relative newcomer, but it's making great progress, with a second distillery slated to open on the south of the Island. Benromach in Speyside offers a milder alternative to the famous Islay melts. Newly blossoming distilleries such as Wolfburn, Ardnamurchan, Annandale and Dornoch are leading the pack and we await their produce with much anticipation!

International adoration

I think a combination of tradition and heritage contributes to the passionate international fan base for whisky. There is a perception of sophistication attached to Scotch whisky the world over. People in other countries want to be seen to be impressing their friends and family with such a grown-up tippie. I truly believe Scotch whisky is the most complex alcohol in the world – nothing compares to the experience of patiently contemplating a fine dram. There is also such an abundance of choice in the category. Whisky is a perfect haven for all personalities, from the obsessive geeks and collectors to the whisky and coke drinkers.

Gin, vodka and other spirits

Consumers have never been more spoiled for choice. Scotland is producing a large majority – roughly 70% of gin produced in the UK at the moment. We're seeing more interest in Scotch whisky than ever before, too. I think the average consumer is far more knowledgeable than they used to be when it comes to type of serve, garnishes and so on. This is excellent for keeping us on our toes as we have to be ahead of the curve. I enjoy seeing the rise of hyper-local



ingredients, producers, retailers and bars, and the future is looking promising with regards to quality, well-crafted alcohol brands. There are an almost innumerable amount of brands creating gin and vodka in Scotland. Dark Matter Distillers has been producing Scotland's first rum since 2014 – its spiced rum has been going down a treat with our customers since day one. Strathearn in Methven is producing some of the most experimental products in the country. Not content with simply making gin and whisky, distilleries have tinkered with everything from apple brandy to genever. Arbielie Highland Estate should be commended for being the first truly farm-to-bottle distillery in the country and the only one which produces gin from scratch. Glasgow now has Makar, Old Tom, Oak Aged and Mulberry Aged gins, which have all been garnering great feedback.

New trends

I think we'll move away from age statements on single malts, and continue to see a rise in grain and quality blended whiskies. I have been enjoying the discussion around the versatility of Scotch whisky.

For too long we've been scared to add anything to our dram, treating it reverentially and striking down those who add ice, water or other ingredients. I'd argue that it holds our national drink back and we should embrace mixed drinks, cocktails and alternative serves to encourage other demographics into the category. If you haven't tried a whisky highball with ginger ale, you are missing out!

CRAFT BEER RISING

- The CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2015 states that Scotland is home to 80 breweries
- A strong interest in Scottish craft beer products has developed from across the globe, especially in the Nordic nations of Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, according to research conducted by The Brewers Association of Scotland (TBAS)
- Interest is also prevalent from existing visitor markets of USA, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and China
- TBAS estimates these markets who show interest in Scottish craft beer have a potential value to the industry of around £158 million per annum
- At Waitrose, sales of Scottish craft beer and premium ales more than doubled between May and August 2016. Figures show sales are growing six times faster than ales from the rest of the UK, with Waitrose increasing the number of Scottish breweries it works with to 24 in late May 2016



GREAT GLEN CHARCUTERIE

Great Glen Charcuterie is based in the village of Roy Bridge, set deep in the rugged Scottish Highlands. Established in 2003 by Jan Jacob Baak, he started producing prime cuts from local wild venison, and over the years has developed products such as Chorizo, Pepperoni, Salami and a Bresaola, all of which are made from the signature sustainably-sourced wild venison. Its award-winning Green Pepper Venison Salami is gently spiced with green peppercorns for a perfectly-balanced snack. Made with 100% venison, the versatile character of the meat means it pairs well with cheese and olives. greatglencharcuterie.com

ISLAND BAKERY

Joe and Dawn Reade have been making the Island Bakery Organics range of biscuits on the Isle of Mull for 15 years. The couple began a bread bakery business in Tobermory in 1994, and diversified into biscuits in 2001 to help to balance out the seasonal nature of the business. The company now focuses entirely on biscuit making in their sustainable energy-powered premises. The Readers are proud to now be employing over 40 staff on the Hebridean island. islandbakery.co.uk



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Hot Sauce AWARDS
5 AWARDS**

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HOT SAUCE
AWARDS
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YOU CAN
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ONE THIRD PLACE**

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GREAT
TASTE AWARDS
36 AWARDS**

WORLD HOT SAUCE AWARDS WINNER 2015

SCOTTISH CHAMPIONS by Uncle Roy - See these and more @ www.uncleroys.co.uk

SCOTLAND'S SPECIALITY FINE FOOD SHOW

Experience an array of delicious food and drink companies at the first fine food show of the year

IN DETAIL

WHAT: Scotland's Speciality Food Show
WHERE: SECC, Glasgow
WHEN: 22nd-24th January 2017
WEB: scotlandsspecialityfoodshow.com

Long renowned for the quality and diversity of the food and drink it produces, Scotland is a hotbed for new talent. With exports growing higher with the weak pound, as well as a thriving home market, the Scottish food and drink sector has reached a record turnover, according to the Scottish Government. Predicted to be worth £16.5bn in 2016 and showing substantial growth over the last eight years, the Scottish food and drink sector is one of the most successful sectors in Scotland.

Scotland's Speciality Food Show, taking place in Glasgow in January in conjunction with Scotland's Trade Fair, is a must-visit for thousands of food buyers, from farm shops to delis, hotels to cafés and tourist shops to department stores. With almost two thirds of all the 140 stands already booked, and over a third of these as new exhibitors, it is a definite date for the diary - 22th-24th January 2017.

The three-day event allows buyers the first opportunity of the year to see new ranges, taste new products and plan their stock for the year ahead.

As the only fine food trade show in Scotland it attracts many new exhibitors such as:

Tracklements - voted Best Speciality Supplier of Pickles & Chutneys by the independent trade for five years running; Tracklements hand make an artisan range of over 60 award-winning condiments and this is the first time they have exhibited here.

Orkney Distilling with its new gin launched in August 16 and Orkney's first gin - Kirkjuvagar handcrafted gin. Orkney has a fantastic local resource in terms of brand provenance. The makers are both born and bred 'Kirkwallians' and so wanted to retain a strong local connection to their heritage - the name is a 1,000 year old Viking name for Kirkwall.

Franklin & Son - artisan soft drinks.

We Love Manfood - great tasting food for blokes.

Mhor Bread - artisan bread and cakes from Perthshire.

McQueen Gin from Perthshire which has some of the world's first flavours of gin - Sweet Citrus, Chocolate Mint, Mocha and Smokey Chilli - all bottled in a beautiful ceramic dark blue bottle.

Island Bakery from Skye with its delicious biscuits and snacks.

Perthshire Preserves - high quality handmade preserves.

Together with established exhibitors such as Crystals Shortbread, Little Doone Foods, Stewart Tower Dairy, Poporopo Popcorn, Orkney Food and Drink,

Stoats Porridge Bars and Great Glen Charcuterie, food outlets will be able to source many delicious products.

Distributors The Cress Company and Cotswold Fayre will both have a big presence, showcasing many of their best-selling products.

Certain Scottish islands are known for their food offerings. The Orkney Isles has a collection of stands with some of the finest produce from these isles, including the Orkney Creamery and The Orkney Bakery. A Taste of Arran will offer a taste from this thriving southern island.

Stephen Edge from Campbell's Fudge said about the show: "We launched our products at this show a few years ago and our business is now a full-time job for several people. We have won orders from overseas as well as the UK, including Bermuda, the USA, Sweden and Canada."

To make the visitor experience more complete, the Seminar Theatre features industry experts on subjects such as social media for business, understanding digitally-savvy customers from an FSE trainer, maximising your business through Google from the Google training team, a gin tasting from artisan liquid deli Demijohn, retail advice from Entrepreneurial Scotland and Stuart Gates from Levercliff and much more.

Best Product Awards are also judged on the opening day and offer retailers a snapshot of the best at the show.



THE LAUNCH GALLERY

The Launch Gallery, for young, innovative companies, is now sold out and has a remarkable line-up including:

- **Persie Gin** from Perthshire. A new start up this year this rural gin has three flavours for different palates and is taking the artisan gin market by storm. Created by the distiller behind the touring Gin Club.
- Scottish company **Dukkah Delights** is launching Egyptian Dukkah for the first time in the UK.
- **Rawnychy** from Glasgow is showcasing their handmade raw vegan desserts.
- **Natural World** - natural nut butters with many different products.
- **Tartanice** - luxury Scottish Ice Cream free from any artificial flavourings, colourings, preservatives and gums.

• **Senga's Chilli Kitchen** - makers of spicy jams, jellies, oils and hot sauces from central Scotland.

• **Sri Spice** who make their Sri Lankan-style curry kits by hand, to their own unique recipes, in Fife, Scotland. Healthy and easily made, they are naturally gluten-free, dairy-free, vegan-friendly and can be used with meat or fish.

• **Cocoa Kalula** - handcrafted bespoke chocolates from Ayrshire.

• **The Very Lovely Sauce Company** will be launching new flavours of its unbelievably delicious sweet sauces.

• **Lessadds Syrups** with their homemade syrups from pure and natural ingredients without any additives from Dumfriesshire.

• **Ogilvy Spirits** - Ogilvy Scottish Potato Vodka, produced in Scotland and tended by the Jarron family for four generations, with ground to glass ideology, producing award winning single estate premium vodka.

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Last Words

The final word
on fine food

The New Year is a time for looking ahead. Working Farm wise, we're looking forward to the spring when the mornings are that bit lighter and a little bit warmer! It's a way off, but we know that lambing will be with us soon enough and whilst hardgoing, it's part of the cycle of farming that is always so rewarding.

Our plans for the coming year are based around really making sure that what we offer to our customers is the best it can possibly be. We are working really hard on focusing our marketing on the right audiences. As much as 2016 was about building and moving forward, 2017 will be about refining, sharpening up and really talking to our customers, understanding as much as we can about who they are and what they want.

We still have big plans – the Farm Park will have an extra attraction this year and we're putting investment in to the overall look

Jimmy Doherty

“Onwards and upwards”



of the public areas. It's something that needs to be kept on top of for aesthetic reasons, but also to make sure that footfall around the site is optimised and that our other concessions can make the most of all visitors.

It's exciting times in the Farm Shop, with a new man at the helm, Tim Johnson. As an ex golf-pro and restaurateur, Tim is looking forward to the new possibilities the shop offers to Jimmy's Farm customers. Over to Tim: “Having the springboard of the Jimmy's Farm reputation is a fantastic opportunity for me. Working alongside the established relationships with our current suppliers is really exciting, but I will also be looking to source new lines and offer the customer an

even more interesting and diverse shopping experience. We want people to leave the shop having found a unique local product with a great story. The Farm's butchery produce sitting alongside the Farm Shop's is really complementary. People will know they're going home with something really special.”

It's really great to have Tim on board and things are going just as well with our online butchery. We relaunched back in October just in time for Christmas orders

and it has been great for us. We increased our sales in regular orders as well as Christmas products, and whilst it's early days, we are seeing repeat custom grow. We ship nationwide, which means that the Jimmy's Farm brand is growing beyond Suffolk.

So, on to 2017! 2016 at times felt unsettling and that can have an effect on a visitor attraction like ours. We also had lots of change at the Farm with our renovations and zoo licence, which at times felt like a risk. Our customers have been really great and told us that it's all been for the better, so it's onwards and upwards for the team and we're looking forward to another great year at Jimmy's Farm.

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TWITTER POLL

Post-Brexit and
Trump, how are you
feeling about 2017?

Nervous
29%

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57%

Don't know
14%

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The next issue will include:

- **Essential Products 2017 (for Spring & Summer)**

Contact Aaron on 01206 505 934 to get your products included!

- **Temperature Controlled Packaging**
- **Speciality Teas**
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Next issue available January 2017

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

Paul Hargreaves of Cotswold Fayre



“Pioneers are always going to keep innovating to stay ahead”

Within any sector, there are innovators and copiers. A very well-known example of this is Burger King and McDonald's. Did you know that Burger King never go to a new market or city before McDonald's? They let them create the demand for that kind of food (if it can be called that!) before they make their own move.

It is much the same within the speciality food market. There are innovators who genuinely create something new in either the product itself or its innovative packaging, and then others come through behind on the back of these pioneers. These second wave companies, if they have better financial backing or systems than the pioneers, may be more successful and make more profit than the pioneers. The fact that it is impossible to patent a product within the food and drink sector makes this more likely for us.

Often, however, with a new product or concept the most gain can

be had by working collaboratively with competitive brands, as growth within the category benefits everyone. I was talking to one of the many birch water companies at an event earlier this year. If you don't know, at least five different UK companies launched birch water in 2015. (Previously this was an unknown category within the UK market.) One of the owners told me that he welcomes his competitors at trade and consumer shows, as awareness of the new and unusual product actually builds the market for everyone – a very sensible and wise comment, I thought.

As a wholesaler, being one of the first to consolidate a range of

artisan speciality food and drink, it was inevitable that Cotswold Fayre would be copied by others. And they haven't let us down! Particularly within the past few years, this has happened to a remarkable degree. It doesn't matter, as pioneers are always going to keep innovating to stay ahead. The key is to keep having new ideas, knowing that not all of them will work, but by standing still you will actually start to go backwards.

What can be damaging, though, is if either the innovators or copiers are constantly looking over their shoulders at their competitors. This can become slightly obsessive, and seems to be far too important to

some. Far better to keep focused on the vision you started with, and to plough your own furrow, rather than running the risk of falling into another's.

Even if your company started as a copier, you will hopefully develop your own creativity and passion, which may end up taking the company in a slightly different direction. After all, it is far more exciting to be creating, coming up with new ideas or even borrowing with pride from other sectors or nations. Creating is what humans are made to do. Look around you, wherever you are now. If you are reading this article indoors, which you probably are in January, everything around you has been invented or created by another human being. An awesome thought! Let's make 2017 the year of creativity within this sector. Do something new and original, and believe me, you will feel the pride and satisfaction of being a creator rather than a copier! Have a magical 2017.



5 MINUTES WITH... CESAR RODEN

Founder of Ice Ktchen

WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T WORKING IN THE ICE CREAM INDUSTRY?

I would be working in something else food and drink-related as that's all I know!

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

I left catering college and worked in various pub kitchens and gastro pubs before taking the plunge.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

I personally love business, maybe even more than I love food. It's been a steep crash course in business to date, and I love that no day is the same and that new challenges pop up all the time. It's a double bonus that I'm in the business of food.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DESERT ISLAND-MUST HAVE?

A good set of knives.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?

Winning new business – it's a buzz.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?

Health and safety, as it's a drag but necessary.

TEA OR COFFEE?

Coffee, although I intend to quit as I'm anxious enough already.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE SNACK?

Vietnamese summer rolls.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?

Vietnamese Bánh mì roll from Saigon.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?

My favourite one at the moment is 'good managers light the fire within people, not underneath them'.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?

I don't read many, but The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It was recommended to me, and I highly recommend all small business owners have a read. It gives great advice and focuses on switching from working in your business to working on your business and the distinction between both, as well as lots of emphasis on systems that I am now obsessed with.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?

Savoury, luckily, as it could get dangerous working in my industry otherwise!

DIARY DATES

January

11th-13th

BBC GOOD FOOD LONDON
Olympia, London
bbgoodfoodshowlondon.com

15th-17th

TOP DRAWER SPRING
Olympia, London
topdrawer.co.uk

21st-25th

SIRHA 2017
Lyon, France
sirha.com

22nd-24th

SCOTLAND'S SPECIALITY FOOD SHOW
SECC, Glasgow
scotlandsspecialityfoodshow.com

WINTER FANCY FOOD SHOW

San Francisco
specialtyfood.com

23rd-25th

GREAT HOSPITALITY SHOW
NEC, Birmingham
hospitalityshow.co.uk

29th-1st

ISM
Cologne
ism-cologne.com

February

5th-9th

SPRING FAIR
NEC, Birmingham
springfair.com

8th-9th

THE SOURCE TRADE SHOW
Westpoint, Exeter
thesourcetradeshow.co.uk

15th-18th

BIOFACH
Nuremberg
biofach.de

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*Kantar Worldpanel 52w/e 6th November 2016



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