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SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS



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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the June issue of *Speciality Food*. The summer season is most certainly upon us now, and I hope you're as excited and inspired by it as we are – bring on the picnics, barbecues and evening tipples in the garden, I say!

As ever, this issue is filled to the brim with stocking ideas and advice on how to sell them; from charcuterie (p. 20), chilli products (p. 28) and smoked food and drink (p. 22) to home baking (p. 40) and sweet and savoury biscuits (p. 37), we've got you covered.

We're delighted to share news of Bellavita Expo, being held in London in June. Rare is the person who doesn't appreciate good Italian food, which means that this trade show is one that can't be missed. Boasting a whole host of delicious new products to discover as well as cookery demonstrations from Michelin-starred chefs, Bellavita Expo 2017 is a must-attend.

I'm also excited to share with you a feature entitled Bright Young Things (p. 34), a look at the vibrant, youthful brands entering the fine food and drink sector right now and evolving it entirely for the better. These energy and inspiration-fuelled professionals give us a glimpse at what it takes to be an entrepeneur in our industry today, sharing a tip or two they've gathered along the way. We also hear from Jason Gibb, co-founder of Bread & Butter and associate of our New Producer Awards.

> "I can't put into words how pleased I am with the reception the New Producer Awards have had since their recent launch"

Speaking of which, I can't put into words how pleased I am with the reception the awards have had since their recent launch, from the new businesses entering the awards to the industry in general. Not only have John Shepherd, MD of Partridges and Paul Hargreaves, chief executive of Cotswold Fayre, both pillars of the fine food world, offered their support as judges, but producers themselves have been responding to the scheme even better than I could have hoped. To find out more, either email me at the usual address or visit specialityfoodmagazine.com/awards.

Holly

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NEWS IN BRIEF

NUMBER OF UK DISTILLERIES DOUBLES

A 17 per cent increase in the number of distilleries operating in the UK in 2016 has brought the total figure to an estimated 273, according to the Wine and Spirit Trade (WSTA).

The number of distilleries has more than doubled since 2010, up 135 per cent. The craft gin boom has been noted as a contributing factor to the rise in the opening of distilleries, with 45 new sites registered in 2016.

Miles Beale, chief executive of WSTA said, "From traditional products like scotch to the Great British gin boom and newer products like English and Welsh whisky, it is an exciting time for spirit producers across the UK."

FIGURES SHOW RISE IN THEFTS AGAINST RETAILERS

There were around 3.5m incidents of customer theft against businesses in 2016, up from 3.4m in the year before, according to the latest figures from the Home Office's 2016 Commercial Victimisation Survey.

The survey reports that 37 per cent of premises in the wholesale and retail sector experience some form of crime.

Data from the Association of Convenience Store's (ACS) Crime Report 2017 shows that most commonly stolen items were alcohol, meat and confectionery.

James Lowman, ACS chief executive said, "Shop theft has a significant impact on hard working retailers and must be taken seriously by police forces."





Brexit: One Year On

12 months since the decision was made to leave the EU, is the fine food industry any clearer on what it means for them and their customers?

Since the general public voted to leave the European Union on 23rd June 2016, the food industry has experienced the rigmarole of whether Britain is to go through a 'hard' or 'soft' Brexit, Marmite-gate, the pound hitting a 31-year low and numerous other political and financial situations, both negative and positive depending on your viewpoint.

Many businesses appear to be unsure of the tasks that lie ahead, with lobbyist groups urging the government for more clarity on the subject. The latest report from the Federation of Small Business's (FSB), Reformed Business Funding: What small firms want from Brexit, states that eight in 10 small firms have sought some form of business support services over the last 12 months. Mike Cherry, FSB national chairman said, "Small businesses across the country are staring into a business support black hole from 2021. This is a particularly pressing issue for the many small firms with growth ambitions and those in less economically developed regions. If the next government is serious about developing an industrial strategy that delivers prosperity across all areas of England, it must replace EU funding dedicated to small business support and access to finance after we leave the EU."

Here, we talk to figures of the fine food industry to reflect on how the ups and downs of the last year have affected their businesses and whether they have put a strategy in place to tackle the ensuing process of leaving the EU.

DAVID GREENMAN, CO-OWNER OF ARCH HOUSE DELI



The biggest impact concerning Brexit was the resultant one on the value of sterling, and as a result, the sudden sharp rise in the price of European products. Customers seemed to accept this with products that originated from outside of the UK, but struggled understanding that it also impacted items such as British-made jams and marmalades, even though a lot of the key ingredients come from overseas.

Our business responded to Brexit by absorbing some of the costs initially, and we have increased prices gradually to compensate. I think it is too early for us to plan for the 2019 leave date currently as there are still so many unanswered questions on how it will be implemented.

MARK KACARY, CO-OWNER OF THE NORFOLK DELI



Some prices have gone up on some cheese, coffee and chocolate. The uncertainty caused by Brexit has impacted sterling in the currency markets. If we have significant price hikes by our suppliers we have little option than to raise our prices. Small independent businesses do not have the ability to absorb price hikes in the way major supermarkets can; most customers understand and appreciate that.

Most, approximately 70 per cent, of the products we sell are made locally. This means that they aren't just homegrown, but are produced within a 100-mile radius at most. Therefore people come to our shop for something different, with some looking for local. We do not really face the same issues as businesses that took the route of being European delis do.

It is impossible to put measures in place [ahead of the March 2019 leave date], when we don't really know what to expect. It would be like preparing oneself for floods only to find that we suffer a drought. Having said that, we are probably better placed than some to weather the effects of Brexit as what we sell is locally-made.

TONY GOODMAN, CEO OF YUMSH SNACKS LTD



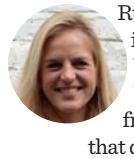
We are still waiting to see what Brexit will mean for the food industry – there is a wide range of opinions on the topic but no-one can know yet.

My view is that regardless of the deals that may or may not happen, we need to embrace it. The Prime Minister's recent comment that we should all "get out into the world, trade and do business around the globe" is a positive message that all British companies should consider. We already export to over 40 countries and look forward to further expansion; I believe there is opportunity everywhere.

We have been exporting Ten Acre crisps and popcorn for a long time but since the announcement of Brexit we have been in constant conversation with our global distributors about what Brexit might mean, and most of them are not worried. Our aim is to still export to as many markets as possible, especially Asia where we're already in a number of countries, but we're looking to get into more.

For a long time there has been a global interest in UK-made snacks, and we can't see this changing.

JENNY COSTA, FOUNDER OF RUBIES IN THE RUBBLE



Rubies in the Rubble is a sustainable food brand that works with UK farmers to use the fruit and vegetables that do not make the supermarket grade. With European exports and trade relationships currently an unknown, fluctuating currencies and imports often being a seemingly cheaper option than homegrown, we now more than ever need to support British farmers. We need to make a conscious effort to buy British, no matter the size or shape, and to work with the UK's seasons to cherish our harvests at their best.



Cotswold Fayre and Partidges Announce Support for New Producer Awards

Figures of the fine food industry have thrown their weight behind *Speciality Food*'s New Producer Awards, with wholesaler Cotswold Fayre announced as one of the awards' sponsors and judges, and MD of Partridges, John Shepherd, unveiled as the chair of judges.

The New Producer Awards, run in association with Bread & Butter, aim to shine a spotlight on new producers that are exemplary within their field, and offer promotional support both within the magazine and online as well as the opportunity to get exciting new products in front of some of the highest-regarded professionals – including renowned retailers, distributors, consultants and magazine editors – in the fine food industry.

Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony taking place on Friday 6th October 2017 at the Bread & Butter Festival, held at the Institute of Directors in London.

Paul Hargreaves, chief executive at Cotswold Fayre said, "We are putting our name to the Sustainable Business Award category of the New Producer Awards. There is a lot of work to do within the speciality food world on developing more sustainable businesses. By providing a consolidation service, we as a wholesaler are part of a drive towards more efficient and sustainable supply chains. However, there is much work to be done and we want to support any businesses developing within this area.

"The New Producer Awards can benefit start-ups by the publicity that is gained through entering, and maybe winning an award, but perhaps most importantly, providing an opportunity to network within the sector. Drawing knowledge from those that have been around the block a few times could stop them making the same mistakes we have!"

John Shepherd, chair of judges said, "I decided to get involved in the New Producer Awards because it is a great way to support the success and achievements of the food and drink start-up community – who are all heroes by definition. It will also highlight a lot of new products that otherwise may go unnoticed. It is particularly good to see that one of the categories is Sustainable Business, which will become of increasing importance to all new producers going forward.

"I believe that the New Producer Awards can benefit start-up companies in a number of ways. It will create awareness of a growing new business sector, generate publicity for up-and-coming brands and increase confidence to those who have had little recognition for their work. Good food shops need good new producers."

Holly Shackleton, editor of *Speciality Food* said, "I'm delighted to have these fine food heavyweights on board – it only goes to show how much this industry needs to celebrate and support start-ups."

To enter the New Producer Awards, fill in the online form at specialityfoodmagazine.com/awards

New Guide Launched to Boost UK Speciality Food and Drink Exports

Food and Drink Federation (FDF) and Food and Drink Exporters Association (FDEA) have developed a five-step guide to help companies to establish or boost overseas sales.

The guide, entitled *Food and Drink Exporting - Five Steps to Success*, encourages current and would-be exporters to consider the core elements of the export process and provides tips and relevant contact details.

It is broken down into five sections: Step One – is now the right time to export?, Step Two – do your research, Step Three – create opportunities, Step Four – export practicalities, and Step Five – growing export.

In addition to the new guide, FDF has encouraged the Government to work with the industry to scale-up its provision of specialist food and drink export support by putting in place a one-stop shop to support small and medium-sized exporters

UK food and drink exports reached a record £20bn in 2016, while branded food and drink exports grew 11.5 per cent to £5.2bn. FDF states that it has ambitions to help grow exports of UK branded goods by a third by 2020 to more than £6bn.

Angela Coleshill, competitiveness director at FDF said, "We hope that our guide will enable more of the UK's 6,800 food and drink producers to grow their businesses by becoming successful exporters. Manufacturers in competing nations typically benefit from more generous Government export support than those in the UK, so it is absolutely essential that organisations such as FDF and FDEA work together to help unlock our industry's huge potential.

"While our future trading terms with the EU are unclear, now is the time for British businesses to embrace new opportunities in non-EU countries and take advantage of rising demand to make inroads into new markets."

John Whitehead, director of FDEA said, "There's great interest across the globe in UK food and drink, which continues to possess a reputation for real quality. We'd like to see more manufacturers look beyond their domestic market and take advantage of these opportunities, which can really help businesses grow."

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RICHARD FOX

"The living is easy"

With the passing of spring and the clocks' accompanying giant leap forward, a lingering and exponentially growing feel good factor is left in that single hour's wake. Finally, as March gives way to April, and April morphs seamlessly into a more languid June, harsh winter months are but a distant memory and we can start to truly celebrate the bountiful produce of the sunshine seasons.

Asparagus, brown crab, Jersey Royals read like a roll call of superstars of great British produce – all flying the new spring and summer flags. And while they can all feature perfectly happily as component parts of bigger dishes, their simple powers of flavour allow them to shine as headliners in their own right. For me, this is the time for minimal cooking and maximum savouring, when the chef is merely the facilitator – the middle man if you like between field, or sea and fork.

I cannot tell you how many weekend afternoons I have wiled away, teasing the sweet white meat from the fragile frame of a Brown Cornish or Cromer crab; crusty brown bread and a simple mayonnaise at the ready in support roles to a taste experience that offers an entertainment experience in its own right. A bowl of Jersey Royals simply tossed in butter with some quality seasoning are testament to the 1,500 tonnes a day that are exported during May from this tiny corner of Britain.

But perhaps the greatest culinary feat of spring and to nearly the end of June is asparagus. There is no greater gulf between the same genesis of any produce in the world than that between British asparagus in season and its continental namesake. While its season is devastatingly short – just a couple of months, its capacity for growth is unprecedented: in full flight at peak season, 10cm a day is not uncommon. And while the statistics induce sharp intakes of breath, the flavour inspires exhalations of ecstasy. Once again, simplicity is the key: a quick boil in well-salted water, and nothing more than a side dish of butter sauce or hollandaise to offer unrivalled culinary pleasure.

In a retail landscape where mass shopping habits have separated us from the simple joy of embracing the quality which can be enjoyed from true seasonality, early summer is without doubt, an opportunity for the farm shop and local deli to shine like a gastronomic beacon of light in the midst of the generic mediocrity of bland imported produce.

Furthermore, the independent retailer has the unique opportunity to be the conduit of the story between producer and customer –the special one with a personal relationship with that magician of flavour whose family have harboured the secrets of absolute excellence for generations. This connection is worth its weight in Jersey Royals.

Delivered in hushed tones with a knowing smile to the wide-eyed consumer – a story of the produce derived through unique access to the inner circle of the foodie world can create a customer loyalty that no special offer, BOGOF or reward points will deliver in a decade.

WBC Rolls Out New Display Lines

WBC, supplier of retail display units and packaging, has announced an expansion of its BRIX modular display system, with additional fixtures and colours added to the range.



The BRIX display unit allows retailers to transform its design when seasonality and space demands. It comprises of four basic components and requires no tools to construct, which allows for a multitude of configurations and lets retailers construct their own shelving, central floor displays or merchandising point of sale area with the ability to easily re-form it.

BRIX is handcrafted from reclaimed wood, distressed metal and copper caged wire; a white colourway has now been added to the list of colours available.

Andrew Wilson, managing director of WBC said, "Created for those looking for something different from the traditional shop fit, BRIX has exceeded all of our expectations with its broad appeal. We 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 of these fronts."

WBC has also introduced a new range of countertop kits which require no assembly, and have an all-inclusive display unit featuring a stand and trays. They are made to fit all styles of countertops and till points.

The kits comprise a two-tier steel frame stand together with a choice of traditional or new brown wicker trays.

Andrew continued, "No longer do you have to sift through the many different trays and baskets on offer to find those that fit the right display stand. Our new range of countertop display units arrive in ready-to-go kits, complete with an angled frame stand and made-to-fit wicker baskets that sit perfectly within, allowing what you display to be more visible and comfortable to shop."





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CHARLES CAMPION

"Flamin' June"

For anyone interested in cooking and eating, deciding which of the 12 months is best for food and drink is like picking a fantasy football team – it's perfectly alright in theory but will soon be overwhelmed by events. November has its supporters – think of all those unctuous stews, crumpets that drip butter, roast gamebirds and heart-warming soups. But the golden month must be June, if only because it is such a contrast to the "hungry months" of January and February. The weather is better in June and the fisherman can put to sea, mackerel and crabs are top quality. The spring flush of grass has worked its magic on the cheeses. In June there are new potatoes, peas and tiny beans. Strawberries, rhubarb and gooseberries. The exotic stuff is also at a peak – gulls' eggs, calcots, elderflowers. Most accomplished cooks know that every great meal stems from buying the very best ingredients and interfering as little as possible. If you cannot cook up a storm with June's bounty there'll never be a better time. At this time of year, food and drink should be celebrated everywhere.

News of the global reach of the pasty. Wind the clock back to 1658 when the first settlers were landing on the Cayman Islands. In 1654, Oliver Cromwell sent a task force to fight in the Anglo-Spanish War, and it included the first man to settle on the Cayman isles. He was either called Bodden or Bawden (in those days illiteracy encouraged a more flexible approach to spelling). Today the Cayman Isles are one of the larger British overseas territories, and they're into hardcore banking and tourism. Mr Bush – their man in London – has hit upon the jolly wheeze of trying to find UK descendants of the marine called Bodden. The Caymanians feel closest to the Cornish, and point out that there are many elements common to both of them – fishing, boat building, a westerly aspect and, bizarrely, "inventive cooking". Apparently, the Islanders are famous for their "Cayman Isles patty" which is uncannily like a Cornish pasty.

Boffins will confirm that we are more susceptible to the smell of a drink or dish than its taste. They would confirm that whisky tasters get 70% of their impression from the nose. The big supermarkets understand this theory and are not averse to siting the fan outlet from the bakery beside the front door. The makers of instant coffee make sure that a small puff of coffee-scented air is trapped in the jar under the paper seal. None of which compares with the full blown "olfactory molestation" suffered by several Italian neighbours. In a court case in Montefalcone, Italy, the irate occupants of a block of flats sued a married couple who cooked pot after pot of rich pasta sauce and horror of horrors, sometimes fried fish. The litigants claimed that the smell permeated all the other flats. The smell of bread fresh from the oven, of freshly roasted coffee, of a massive beef joint "resting" before lunch are all aromas we can take pleasure in. But before pooh-poohing those sensitive Italians, surely much depends on just what the smell is? How about continual kippers, over-boiled cabbage or burnt toast? Not worth a lawsuit but not very pleasant.

Cotswold Fayre Partners with Chilled Logistics

Fine food distributor and wholesaler Cotswold Fayre is extending its chilled operation by partnering with temperature controlled transportation company Chilled Logistics.

Northampton-based Chilled Logistics operates across the whole of the UK and Europe with a fleet of temperature controlled vehicles.

Cotswold Fayre's chilled operation will now be able to stretch as far north as York, and reach Norwich, Portsmouth, Bournemouth and beyond Cardiff by the end of the year.

Paul Hargreaves, chief executive at Cotswold Fayre said, "The growth of our chilled business has previously been limited by our ability to scale up the distribution. However, this new partnership with Chilled Logistics will allow us to deliver to our existing and new customers within a 125-mile radius of their base in Northampton, with plans to further expand in the future.

"Our customers are seeking to save time and improve the ordering process by reducing the number of individual suppliers. Our very low minimum order of £100 makes it easy for our customers to use us for consolidation of their chilled supply with a weekly delivery."

Tara Temniuk, depot manager at Chilled Logistics said, "We are really excited to be adding Cotswold Fayre to our customer portfolio. Our service is of the highest quality and we believe that our experienced logistics team will help Cotswold Fayre's chilled business expand a great deal by the end of 2017."

Cotswold Fayre is continuing to grow its chilled operation, with 275 chilled products from 30 brands now included in its portfolio. The most recent additions are a range of yoghurts from Glenilen Farm, Pegoty Hedge ready-made meals and Nutmeg & Hive's selection of super yoghurts.

UK Consumers 'Hugely Misunderstand' Sugar Levy

UK shoppers appear to be confused about the impending sugar tax according to a recent survey, with none of the 500 people polled in a Nielsen survey aware it only applied to soft drinks.

Around eight in 10 of those who took part in the Nielsen Sugar Tax Survey 2017 were aware of the sugar levy, which will come into effect in April 2018, but two thirds believed it applied to sweets and confectionery.

59 per cent thought it applied to chocolate, 57 per cent said biscuits, 56 per cent cakes, and 28 per cent did not think it applied to soft drinks at all.

Sophie Jones, senior shopper analytics consultant at Nielsen said, "Currently, there's a huge misunderstanding about what products the sugar tax affects, so when it comes in, the Government, manufacturers and retailers have an enormous education job on their hands to avoid unforeseen consequences beyond fizzy drinks.

"Most notably in high-sugar categories where shoppers incorrectly think prices have gone up or, indeed, any other category where people may offset the higher price of fizzy drinks by buying less of other things."

"There's a huge misunderstanding about what products the sugar tax affects, so when it comes in, the Government, manufacturers and retailers have an enormous education job on their hands to avoid unforeseen consequences beyond fizzy drinks."







Keelham Farm Shop Wins Big at Farm Shop & Deli Awards 2017

Yorkshire-based Keelham Farm Shop has been announced as The Retailer of the Year winner of the Farm Shop & Deli Awards 2017 at the Farm Shop & Deli Show at NEC Birmingham.

After receiving entries from across the UK, and over 3,000 consumer votes, the 13 category and nine regional award winners have been revealed, with Keelham Farm Shop not just scooping the Retailer of the Year 2017, but also the Large Retailer of the Year and North East Regional accolades.

Keelham Farm Shop serves up to 19,000 customers a week and champions over 400 local farmers and producers.

The awards were judged by a panel of experts from the world of speciality retail, fine food and food media, including Arthur Howell, fourth generation butcher and 2016 Farm Shop & Deli Awards Retailer of the Year, Jon May, managing director of Fabulous Food & Drink, Megan Tatum, deputy features editor of *The Grocer* and Holly Shackleton, editor of *Speciality Food*.

Shortlisted entrants were chosen before judges hit the road to secret-shop the award hopefuls. The judges travelled the country to experience first-hand the enthusiasm, produce and customer satisfaction on offer in each of the shortlisted businesses.

Victoria Robertshaw, co-owner of Keelham Farm Shop said, "It's the relationships we've built up with over 400 local farmers and producers over three generations of Robertshaws that enable us to deliver great-tasting, affordable, fresh food to around 19,000 customers a week. The Keelham team is full of people who are passionate about food, who believe that fresh ingredients should be available for everyone every day – not just for special occasions – and it's really rewarding to know that our approach has impressed our peers within the industry, as well as the judges."

Nigel Barden, chairman of judges said, "It's a real privilege to acknowledge food and drink retailers of this quality and those looking after our online shopping requirements. These are passionate, enterprising, knowledgeable and diligent people."

Around 4,000 visitors and over 450 exhibitors celebrated the seventh Farm Shop & Deli Show. The show welcomed thousands of retailers and small business owners through its doors, with industry experts and suppliers on hand to share advice.

The next Farm Shop & Deli Show will take place at the Birmingham NEC from 16th–18th April 2018, and will run alongside the Food & Drink Expo, National Convenience Show, Foodex and Food Ingredients Show.

FARM SHOP & DELI AWARDS WINNERS

The category and regional winners are:

- **Keelham Farm Shop, Skipton, West Yorkshire**
  Retailer of the Year 2017
  Farm Shop Large Retailer of the Year and North East regional winner
- **Hobbs House Bakery, Tetbury, Gloucestershire**
  Baker of the Year and South West regional winner
- **Cunningham Butchery and Food Hall, Kilkeel, Down**
  Butcher of the Year and Northern Ireland regional winner
- **Paxton & Whitfield, Jermyn Street, London**
  Cheesemonger of the Year and South East regional winner
- **Delilah Fine Foods Leicester, Leicester, Leicestershire**
  Delicatessen of the Year
- **The Gog Farm Shop, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire**
  Farm Shop Small Retailer of the Year and East Anglia regional winner
- **Ramus Seafood Emporium, Harrogate, North Yorkshire**
  Fishmonger of the Year
- **Delifonseca Dockside, Liverpool, Merseyside**
  Food Hall of the Year and North West regional winner
- **Rafters of Driffield, Driffield, East Yorkshire**
  Greengrocer of the Year
- **Siop Pwllglas, Ruthin, Denbighshire**
  Local Shop of the Year and Wales regional winner
- **Horsforth Farmers' Market, Horsforth, West Yorkshire**
  Market of the Year
- **Chatsworth Estate Farm Shop, Bakewell, Derbyshire**
  Midlands regional winner
- **Brace of Butchers, Dorchester, Dorset**
  Newcomer of the Year
- **Farmison & Co, Ripon,North Yorkshire**
  Online Business of the Year
- **Billington's of Lenzie, Lenzie, Glasgow**
  Scotland regional winner

Easter Food Spending Sparks Rise in April Retail Sales

Food sales increased 2.4 per cent on a like-for-like basis and 3.6 on a total basis over the three-months to April thanks to higher spending over Easter, reports the BRC – KRMG Retail Sales Monitor April 2017.

The growth is much faster than the 12-month total average growth of 2 per cent and the highest since February 2014.

According to the research, overall April UK retail sales increased by 5.6 per cent on a like-for-like basis from April 2016, when they had decreased 0.9 per cent from the preceding year.

Helen Dickinson OBE, chief executive of the BRC said, "As expected, the Easter holidays provided the welcome boost to retail sales, which goes some way to making up for the disappointing start to the year. That said, the positive distortion from the timing of Easter was largely responsible for the month's growth and looking to the longer-term signs of a slowdown, the outlook isn't rosy.

"Taking a closer look at the sales figures, consumer spend on food and non-food items is diverging. Food categories continue to contribute the most weight to overall growth, although food inflation has a part to play in this.

"Shop prices are still down overall although other items of consumer spending are increasing headline inflation and hence driving a tightening of purse strings. Although today's figures do indicate that consumers are still willing to spend, with a cocktail of rising costs and slowing wage growth as the backdrop, conditions for consumers will get tougher.

"The next Government needs to deliver a plan that puts consumers first in its economic policies and the forthcoming Brexit negotiations."

Paul Martin, UK head of retail at KPMG said, "April's sales provided a brief period of respite for retailers following a relentless start to the year. However, much of the rise was driven by the timing of Easter and the growing inflationary pressures the sector is facing, rather than a sudden upswing in consumer confidence."

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2017 winner Keelham Farm Shop collecting the award from Chair of Judges Nigel Barden and 2016 winner Arthur Howells



JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES

"Trump slump or May sway?"

"Here we go round the mulberry bush" one customer said on hearing the news of a General Election in June this year.

This is in fact the 17th General Election that the Queen has been through as monarch, and the 11th that Partridges has been through as a food shop. More to the point, it is the third national vote in three years if you include the EU Referendum last year. Will election fatigue trigger speciality food fatigue?

Traditional views hold that general elections, being uncertain processes, tend to slow economic growth and dampen sales. However, from past experience and from the speciality food side of things, the question is "are we going to notice any difference at all either before, during or after the election period?" – probably not, in my opinion.

As I said earlier, Partridges has been through 11 General Election campaigns in its time, resulting in the pendulum swinging to five labour victories, five Conservative victories and one coalition. Because we are selling speciality and artisanal products and because we are based in an affluent area of West London, the results of elections do not normally affect customer spending patterns. For example, in 1983, which was a resounding Conservative victory under Mrs Thatcher, our sales were significantly up in the following year. This pattern was repeated in 1987, when there was another convincing Conservative victory and sales rose once more by a good margin. However, in 1992 when the Conservatives won under John Major and economic storm clouds were assembling, our sales dropped by 9%. In 1997, when Labour won its own resounding victory under Tony Blair, sales remained level. In 2001 and with another Labour victory, sales declined by 5%, but following 2005 with another Labour victory sales rose by 9%. In 2010, with the Coalition's victory, sales were up 6%, and in 2015 with a Conservative victory, sales rose by 8% the following year. A brief analysis might be that sales drift upwards with inflation and may be boosted by a Conservative victory but are not adversely affected by a Labour one.

Consumer spending is at best always unpredictable, but it seems that expectations play a large part. It is rather stating the obvious, but when there is a positive outlook or stability there is less inhibition to spend.

However, it is also true to say that we have not been affected too badly by recessions either. We opened in 1972, just prior to the 1974 recession. We expanded in size to three units in 1984 just after the recession of the 1980s. For the recession in 1990 we kept our heads down, but it seems that in difficult times food that is of good quality and has an interesting provenance holds its own. The downside may be that in good times food retailers do not enjoy the boom as much as other sectors of the economy. It is important to reiterate that we at Partridges look at this through the prism of West London retail experience. It may be depressing to think of the political situation at times, but on previous experience this is unlikely to affect sales.

It is also important to note that many people are not interested in elections in the first place. Voter turnout in British elections remains low compared to other countries. Last year at the EU Referendum, 12 million people did not exercise their right to vote. During the 2012 American elections 129 million people confirmed their intention to vote but 171 million people confirmed their intention to celebrate Halloween, according to one poll. Which goes to show the increasing importance of events in the life of a speciality food shop rather more than elections.

Independents to Serve Free Organic Breakfasts

Independent retailers are serving free organic 'mini breakfasts' on 14th June to showcase the range of organic food and drink they have on offer.

The breakfasts will be served as part of the Organic Trade Board's Wake Up To Organic campaign, which aims to spread awareness of the benefits of choosing organic produce and to encourage more consumers to taste organic food.

Over 100 different independent shops have already signed up to the event, but organisers from the Organic Trade Board are setting their sights on getting around 200 stores involved.

Catherine Fookes, campaign manager at the Organic Trade Board said, "Building on the success of Wake Up To Organic last year, we know the campaign is a great opportunity for independent retailers to communicate directly with their customers and help change attitudes to organic."

David Greenman, co-owner of Arch House Deli said, "At last year's Wake Up To Organic we provided a free bowl of organic muesli with organic milk with every hot drink, and this year we'll probably come up with something slightly different, but just as tasty.

"When it comes to persuading customers, some products are easier to substitute than others. For example, rather than buying a processed Cheddar and pre-packed blue cheese, next time they can try Godminster Cheddar and Bath Blue. They are both organic, local and delicious."



Retail Employment Hours Continue to Dwindle

The decrease in the number of hours worked by retail staff has continued for another year, according to the British Retail Consortium's (BRC) latest Retail Employment Monitor.

The report states that the equivalent number of full-time jobs fell by 3.9 per cent in the first quarter of this year, compared with the same first three months of 2016.

It found that while both food and non-food retailers contributed to the decline in hours, food saw the deepest fall.

All three months of the quarter reported a decline in FTE employment, with January's decline only marginally shallower than that seen in February and March.

Despite the reduction in employment hours, the number of outlets rose by 0.6 per cent compared with the same quarter a year ago, with food retailers driving the overall increase in the number of shops.

Helen Dickinson, chief executive of BRC said, "Today's fall in full-time equivalent employment from our sample of retailers shows a continuation of a year-long downward trend of retailers reducing the number of hours being worked.

"We expect retailers to continue reviewing how they work with their people as they look to address the changing face of retail and keep prices low for consumers. Building inflationary pressures and public policy costs, alongside intense competition, are taking their toll, and retail, as a people-intensive industry, is being hit hard. That said, many retailers are actively investing in their people to improve the quality and productivity of jobs per employee.

"Looking ahead to the Brexit negotiations for the next Government; certainty for the EU colleagues working in the industry and a business tax environment fit for purpose in the 21st century are what's needed for the retail industry to drive productivity with better jobs, innovation and new skills for the digital age."

> "We expect retailers to continue reviewing how they work with their people as they look to address the changing face of retail and keep prices low for consumers"



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THE INTERVIEW: NIGEL BARDEN

One of the most recognisable faces in fine food talks about the past, present and future of food

I've worked across the food and drink industry in a number of guises, and so I feel privileged to be able to see and appreciate it from a number of angles; as well as broadcasting about food and drink and judging for multiple awards schemes, I have been a wine merchant, and grew up on a cattle and sheep farm – that has influenced me more than anything else. I always had an interest in agriculture and food, and the entire process that entailed. In fact, I went to Cirencester Agricultural College for a year, and worked with a company which specialised in land agency in Yorkshire before I became a wine merchant, which probably suited me better if I'm honest. I supplied fantastic hotels and restaurants in the north of England, then worked with some in in the south including Clivedon, The Grosvenor and the Royal Crescent in Bath. It was a really interesting time, and probably where my love of food really kicked off. This gave me access to the world of chefs, but I'm conscious of being very consumer-friendly – everything I make on the radio needs to be easily accessible for all. I was lucky enough to host the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards when Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck won it, so I've experienced the very highest end of food, including at Noma in Copenhagen which was incredible. I've had great meals across the world, but I always remember that sometimes simple is best – an establishment may not be in the most enchanting setting, but you can still have an incredible meal.

The variety of produce available to us at the moment is hugely exciting, but what's even more amazing is what people are doing with it. I like the fact that Brits these days are prepared to taste pretty much anything. The artisan sector is particularly brilliant – to actually meet farmers and producers at markets and shows is wonderful, and the growth of this side of the sector means that people's awareness and education is so much better than it ever was. If you go to some of these markets, particularly in the big cities, the varieties of the cuisines is amazing – in particular, I find the street food on offer really exciting. It demonstrates the joy of immigration – it means we have a real diversity of food styles at our fingertips. Also, as a Commonwealth country with a responsibility to other nations, we have a very eclectic base of people living here. Take Yorkshire for example. You can have access to only Yorkshire produce and still have a huge range of foods to enjoy – from incredible spice products from Bradford or Halifax to the most amazing rhubarb, for example. I judge at the Taste of Yorkshire awards, and it's just fantastic to see what's coming out of my home county. This growth is visible across the UK, and across a number of sectors. I'm also involved with the Society of Independent Brewers (SICA), which passionately champions great quality beer. Britain was down to around 70 brewers in the 1970s and are now up to two and a half thousand, which has been fabulous to see, and this has largely been down to increased consumer appreciation and the work of SICA and other proud advocates of great beer.

It's imperative that the public is educated about food. In a number of ways this learning begins with children; a lot of Governments have promised better food education in the curriculum throughout the years, but I don't see much of that happening.There's a lot of work to be done. Throughout my time working with the British Cookery School Awards, I've found that some of the most inspiring enterprises are based in areas where life is quite tough; they'd go into youth centres to teach children about food, and often end up teaching parents as well. One in particular, Alpha Bake Cookery, is run by a hugely inspirational woman who can't afford to run a cookery school but sets up mobile cookers in community centres and puts on cookery demonstrations – it shows people that they don't need to resort to convenience or takeaway food, and in fact her audience are often the people who can afford it the least. They rack up a lot of expenses by eating 'convenience' foods, but nutritionally are no better off.

Some of this consumer connection with food has to be driven by individuals in the private sector, trying to hook up with schools, knowing that the reality is that budgets are making it hard for caterers to be able to manage education in schools. If people in our industry have a connection with and a greater understanding of food, it makes sense for them to share that with people who aren't in that position. Consumers need to be taught that, contrary to popular belief, it's often cheaper to buy produce from farm shops and markets rather than supermarkets – not least because they're then not paying for expensive packaging and lighting bills. One of the biggest lessons is not to overcomplicate things. I maintain that one of the best fast foods is a great bit of ripe cheese and an apple. Full of goodness, potentially produced locally, and cheaper than fish fingers.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

FOOD WASTE...

Make the most of food. If you have some bread which has gone stale, make a panzanella or a bread and butter pudding – there's no need to waste it.

THE FUTURE...

The more that deli owners, farmers and fishmongers can get into schools or get pupils to visit them, the more the interests of children will be pricked to want to get into the sector. It will also make children think about what they want to eat, so you've got to listen to them – you ignore them at your peril.

CONSUMER DEMAND...

Consumers are starting to really think hard about where their food is coming from, and if they see a chicken selling for only £2, they wonder why.

> "Consumers need to be taught that, contrary to popular belief, it's often cheaper to buy produce from farm shops and markets rather than supermarkets – not least because they're then not paying for expensive packaging and lighting bills"

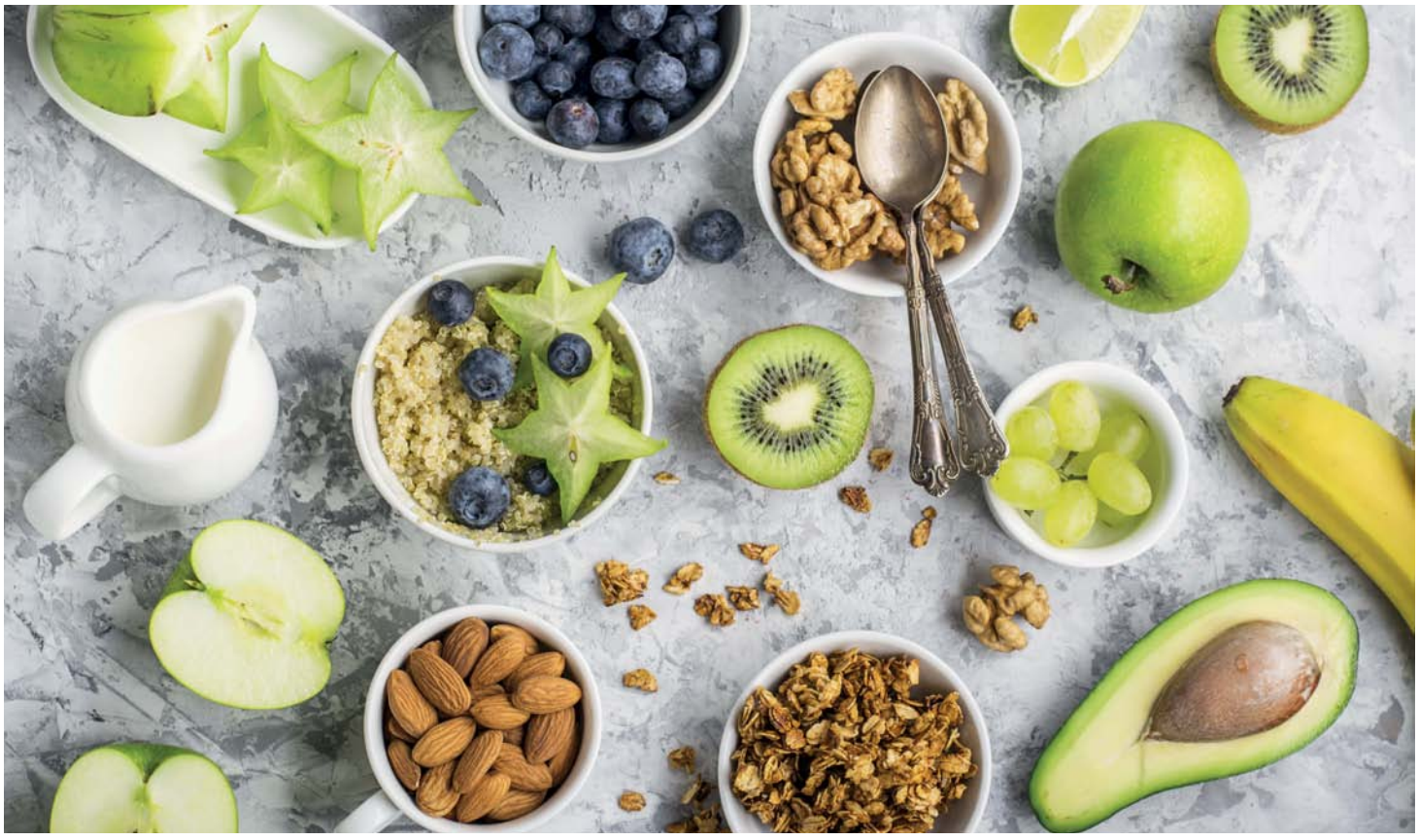
MAKING IT WORK

Coming from a farming background, I find it particularly gratifying to see that the nature and approach of farmers is changing. Agritourism is on the up – we can meet farmers at markets, and really get to know the story behind what they do. It's a much more public-facing role these days, compared to before, when farmers would keep themselves to themselves and just sell their produce on through the industry. To maintain a profit, they're selling directly to consumers; this means that they have more control over what they do and make more breath, as they say where I'm from. Keelham Farm Shop, winner of the Retailer of the Year accolade at this year's Farm Shop & Deli Awards, for example, runs a juice bar. They sold 54,000 bottles of beers last year, but even more more individual juices which are made to order. A lot of those were green – who'd have thought green juices would go down so well in Yorkshire?

We're an island race and should be making a lot more of our fantastic resource of fish, and to be able to promote the few fishmongers we have left through schemes such as the Farm Shop & Deli Awards, for example, is great. The award was won by Reymouths in Harrogate and Ilkley this year, which means a lot to me as I used to go there in my younger years when visiting family. To be able to promote them and use their produce on BBC Radio 2 is a privilege. There are so many alternatives to the well-known fish like cod and haddock for consumers to explore, and they're often cheaper. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to educate customers on how to find good food more enjoyable and, importantly, affordable.

Indies are invaluable when it comes to consumers connecting with food. You're much better looked after when shopping at an independent retailer, and the food is much more likely to be local. Supermarkets will source from just a couple of abbatoirs from across the country, so the chances of buying a piece of beef there and it being local is incredibly slim. I've worked with Ladies in Beef, a group of women who farm beef cattle, and was delighted to learn that this world is as open as it's ever been – and will probably continue to be so. We will be given as much provenance and traceability as possible if we ask for it, and if we're not given this information it may well be because the powers that be are hiding something.

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With the demand for free-from food and drink showing no signs of diminishing, we take a look at the latest trends emerging from the sector

What was once relegated to being a footnote on packaging to highlight the omission of fats and sugars has now become an approach considered standard practice for many food manufacturers. Gluten, sugar, dairy, lactose, nut, soya and wheat are just a few ingredients that some shoppers are choosing to avoid, with producers creating alternative options to cater to intolerant and health-conscious shoppers.

The rise of free-from shows no signs of slowing down. Kantar Worldpanel noted the boom in free-from in its latest grocery market share figures report for the 12 weeks ending 26th March 2017. Fraser McKevitt, head of retail and consumer insight at Kantar Worldpanel, suggests that it's mainly a younger consumer base that is propelling the demand for free-from. He said, "We've seen shoppers' minds turn to healthy eating after the excess of the festive period and before the temptation of Easter. Great demand for gluten or dairy-free products, particularly from younger shoppers, has boosted the free-from category by 36% year-on-year. In fact, 54% of the population purchased a free-from product during the past three months – that's 3.3 million more people than last year."

Kiti Soinen, head of UK food, drink and foodservice research at Mintel suggests that the proliferation of free-from foods can mainly be attributed to consumer demand for healthy foods. "The 'health halo' of free-from foods is a key driver of uptake and has resulted in a much larger group of users than the limited number of actual or suspected allergy or intolerance sufferers," she says. "However, this leaves the free-from food category exposed to changes in consumer opinion and media coverage. The importance of health in driving uptake also means that companies need to ensure that nutritional profiles are best in class."

Pushing boundaries

Another significant factor that drives growth in the category is the sheer amount of innovative products that hit the market on a regular basis. Take the Product of the Year Award winner of the FreeFrom Food Awards 2016, Bfree's Sweet Potato Wraps, as an example. What would have been considered avant-garde a few years ago may well be deemed a free-from storecupboard staple in the not so distant future. "It is hard to believe how far free-from has come in the last 10 years," says Michelle Berriedale-Johnson, director of the FreeFrom Food Awards. "No matter where you look in the food world there are now excellent free-from equivalents to standard offerings, many of them as good or better – and often healthier – than the originals."

One company that pushes the envelope when it comes to NPD is Fravocado, which creates premium vegan ice cream made from coconut milk and avocado. Not only is it an alternative to traditional dairy ice cream, but it contains no gluten, dairy, soya or nuts. Like the origins of many free-from products, the original idea was conjured up after some blue-sky thinking by founder Becky, who gave up dairy and struggled to find a replacement for ice cream which wasn't full of sugar or additives. The range now consists of three flavours: Original, Raw Cacao and Raspberry & Basil. It is a product perfect for the ever-growing contingent of health-conscious consumers and those with a dairy intolerance.

Another company turning heads is Nutural World, with its plethora of award-winning spreads. What was once an industry dominated by major peanut butter brands has now seen smaller producers creating butter from other nuts such as almonds, macadamias, cashews, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios and brazils. Fans of these alternative nut butters usually opt for them as they tend to contain less additives, salt, sugar and palm oil than some of the mainstream nut butter products. The sector is rife with experimentation, to which Nutural World can testify. The producer's range includes Cashew Butter, Pistachio Butter and Pine Nut Butter, but also combines nuts with seeds and other superfood ingredients to bring together unique flavour and texture pairings, like Hazelnut & Carob Spread, Pecan & Fig Spread and Sesame & Dates Spread, amongst others.

Trade events like Food Matters Live are ideal for scouting the latest free-from trends and products.

This year's show hosts a Free-From Zone, which showcases the developments and products at the forefront of the sector, and can be a indispensable resource for retailers wishing to expand their free-from food and drink offering.

> "The importance of health to today's consumers means that companies need to ensure that nutritional profiles are best in class"

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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up



Lyme Bay Releases Bag-in-Box Cider

Devon-based Lyme Bay Winery has launched its rebranded Jack Ratt cider range with a new three-litre bag-in-box flagship product.

The brand takes its name from 19th century smuggler Jack Rattenbury, who hid his contraband in caves and sunken barrels off of the Jurassic coast.

The cider is made using a blend of freshly-pressed juice from local apples, including Tramlett's Bitter, Foxwhelp and Tom Putt, and comes in easy to transport, pour and reseal bag-in-box packaging. The range comprises a traditional Scrumpy and a full-bodied Vintage Dry.

Hannah Newbery, commercial manager at Lyme Bay Winery said, "With a striking new look, which celebrates the dramatic history of the West Country coastline and the heritage of traditional cider-making, the three-litre bag-in-box is a tempting purchase for farm shop and deli customers stocking up for a family gathering, camping trip or party."

lymebaywinery.co.uk

Coldpress Develops Soft Drinks Range

Cold-pressed juice pioneer Coldpress has released new sparkling juice-based drinks with the aim to "reconnect consumers to a healthier way of thinking".

The company has launched the range with two lightly-carbonated flavours, including Strawberry, Apple & Watermelon Sparkling Water and Raspberry, Pineapple, Apple & Pear Sparkling Water.

Andrew Gibb, founder of Coldpress said, "It hasn't been easy sitting on the sidelines knowing that the common sense thinking we've fostered in premium juices could also ignite a significant soft drinks category reboot. We have a genuine soft spot for a well-meaning yet tarnished soft drinks sector and believe a growing acceptance of the undeniable correlation between what one drinks and how one feels means the time is now ripe for Coldpress to broaden its appeal.



"Watermelons, pineapples, strawberries and pears are all refreshing and flavourful ingredients that we believe will benefit more from a discreet sparkling water backdrop than having their taste notes and nutritional goodness boiled off by traditional pasteurisation techniques."

cold-press.com







A Little Bit Reveals New Look and Lines

Dressing and sauce producer A Little Bit Food Company revealed its rebranded packaging and new products at this year's Farm Shop & Deli Show, held in late April.

The horticultural-focused new design reflects the company's ethos of only using fresh herbs in its range, which now also includes a range of ambient dips and two pasta sauces.

The three newly-launched ambient dips come in 250g jars and are available in Fresh Mint, Beetroot & Feta, Fresh Thyme & Butternut Squash and Fresh Oregano & Aubergine flavours. The new Fresh Basil & Tomato and Fresh Oregano, Olive & Tomato sauces have been launched following the success of the company's Spicy Tomato & Sage pasta sauce.

Sophie Lane Fox, founder of A Little Bit Food Company said, "When I'm not in the kitchen, I'm happiest with trowel in hand, pottering about in my garden. There is something so deliciously rewarding about harvesting your own fresh produce and I wanted to convey this in A Little Bit's updated brand identity. Our key message is that we only ever use fresh herbs, as it makes a big impact on the final flavour. The new packaging illustrates the botanicals and nurturing aspect that are essential to the finished product."

alittlebit.co.uk

Plant-based Pudding Brand Enters Speciality Market

Freaks of Nature has launched a range of puddings which are made purely from plants, are free from dairy, gluten, eggs, soya, white sugar, artificial additives and preservatives, and suitable for vegans and coeliacs.

The 90g pot desserts are made from a combination of fruits, nuts, coconuts, natural nectars and pure cacao.

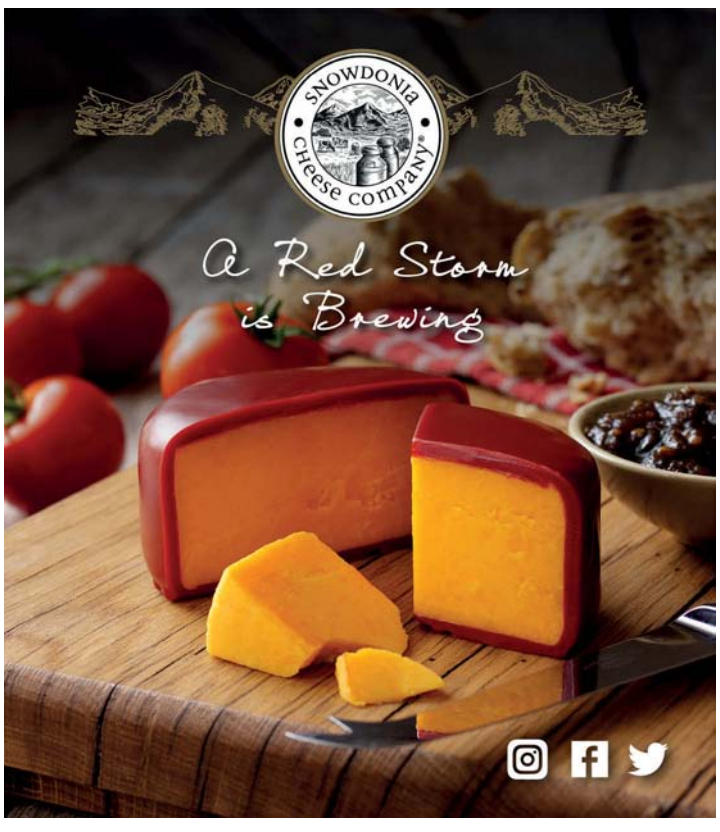
Flavours include Cocoa Loco (double chocolate ganache), Zingy Thingy (lemon posset) and Mango Fandango (vanilla posset with coconut blossom nectar and a coulis made from passionfruit and Indian Alphonso mangoes).

Peter Ahye, founder of Freaks of Nature said, "We noticed that consumers were demanding free-from products across all areas of their eating occasions, rather than just basic cupboard essentials. My mission was to create super-indulgent, natural treats that everyone can enjoy. These puds are a 'freak of nature' as they create something so special from beautiful, simple and natural ingredients.

"UK consumers are making choices based on how a product tastes and how it makes them feel. They want delicious health-focused products with a pure ingredient profile and natural sweetness – they aren't interested in artificial sugars and flavour enhancers."

freaksofnature.co.uk







Cottage Delight Gives Preserves an Alcoholic Twist

Gourmet food producer Cottage Delight hopes to cater to the growing demand for gin with its newly-launched preserves that count the on-trend spirit amongst their list of ingredients.

The traditionally-made Orange Marmalade with Gin and Lemon Curd with Gin recipes were devised with the intention to target a younger customer base. The Orange Marmalade with Gin balances oranges, lemons and a touch of gin, and can be used to spread on croissants or as a filler for sponge cakes. The Lemon Curd with Gin has been introduced to offer a modern version of the company's original Lemon Curd variety.

Chloe Challinor, marketing manager at Cottage Delight said, "Marmalade has always been a strong category for the company and this has been reflected in sales and the awards we've won over recent years. However, our NPD team recognised that marmalade isn't always a considered choice by the younger generation and has responded with this new option to inspire younger foodies."

cottagedelight.co.uk







FruityFoods Adds New Couscous Range

FruityFoods, producer of homemade jam, chutney, risotto and dressings, has added a couscous line to its offering.

The range comprises of five styles: Turkish, Moroccan, Nigerian and Summer, plus a signature option from Chef Gary.

The couscous comes in a ready-to-use pack and is made with a blend of fruits, vegetables, spices and flavourings. Each variety contains only natural ingredients without additives and is suitable for vegans.

FruityFoods was created by former head chef Gary Hill, who sold his products at farmers markets, food festivals and regional food shows before his producers were picked up by farm shops, delis and garden centres.

Gary Hill, proprietor of FruityFoods said, "I created the delicious themed combinations of flavours for use as sides or a base to a whole range of meal choices. I recommend adding a drizzle of olive or rapeseed oil to the couscous before serving."

fruityfoods.co.uk

The Coconut Kitchen Launches New Vegan Dressing



Sauce company and restaurant The Coconut Kitchen has announced a new Japanese-inspired Miso, Sesame & Lemon Dressing.

Launched with the intention of livening up salads over the summer months, it was developed in the founders' restaurant kitchen in Wales and has been tried and tested in dishes for over two years.

Paul Withington, director of The Coconut Kitchen said, "Our new dressing is certainly bang on trend, with miso being an ever-popular ingredient. This sauce is so versatile and it's fantastic for vegan and non-vegan dishes, which opens it up to a very wide market.

"The customer can also be safe in the knowledge that this sauce has been used in many dishes by head chef, Preechaya, at our restaurant over the last two years. Our customers are always commenting on how delicious it is – that's why we just knew we had to launch it into our retail range!"

thecoconutkitchen.co.uk





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GEORGE PAUL OF BRADBURY'S

"You never know what you've got till it's gone"

From its wartime decimation, the unique heritage of UK artisan cheese has slowly clawed its way back to national and international recognition.

More than 600 different and culturally diverse types were effectively destroyed to meet the understandable compulsion for national survival post-WWII, indirectly gifting Cheddar a legacy it could never have dreamed of in the late thirties.

The story of the recreations across British artisan cheese is well written elsewhere, and an eclectic mix of those with long family history, food enthusiasts, farming families, hobbyists, and others battled over seven decades to create an amazing mantle of cheese types. This is supported by some legendary trade individuals, some living, some now departed.

If there were justice in life, that tremendous effort would reap full reward. Alas, the reality of artisan food in the UK is littered with obstacles for those makers unwary enough to believe the cheese road is truly open. Despite all the great leaps forward in food safety, in which all agree, the minefields are being laid endlessly and the cheese world channelled to a safe blandness that threatens unnecessarily to throw recent recovered history on a bonfire.

We all agree any harm to the shopper has to be avoided, but the barriers ranged against artisan cheese are sometimes quite excessive. One offence by anyone seems to be a call to punish all with even more draconian requirements. All of this is in contrast to the steady stream of messages to artisan makers welcoming them to join even the biggest retail sellers, versus a mountainous climb to reach the foothills of possibility.

Many don't even bother, and spin offs from this message of gloom? 20% of younger people now talk of a dairy-free diet, with all the lifelong impacts that will have on bones and good health with the replacement of all the goodness that cheese and its allied products provide with so little recognition. I recently read that 46% of 16-24 year olds now claim some sort of dairy allergy, whereas medical sources say it's 4%, so who is creating this pointless hysteria?

So, what are the prospects for a would-be artisan cheesemaker of tomorrow? They need a clear path to market and it will largely be in specialist areas, online, and even export because so many of the UK options are not realistic anymore. For those who are close to larger retailers, the hurdles continue to get higher and higher.

It isn't as though they are not sought after. The cheese competitions continue to proliferate and there seems to be no lack of entries, and whether solely trade or open to the public, they attract big audiences. These specialist maker cheeses are often used as trophy-winning opportunities by the commercial and marketing elements, whilst operational and technical departments line up expectation after expectation from small makers.

If it were not real it would be just comical, but the good news is that there is demand elsewhere in the great world of cheese, whether here in the UK, or further afield in Europe, USA, China, Asia or elsewhere – or maybe online, farmers markets and of course some of the best independent delicatessen in Europe.

So let's be grateful for the growth and quality of artisan British cheeses worldwide – we need to protect and grow their interests whilst maintaining common sense food safety in the industry.

> "The story of the recreations across British artisan cheese is well written elsewhere, and an eclectic mix of those with long family history, food enthusiasts, farming families, hobbyists, and others battled over seven decades to create an amazing mantle of cheese types"



JULIET HARBUTT

"An opportunity Down Under"

My first year in Hawke's Bay was the best summer on record. This year Mother Nature has gone viral! First a three-month drought then torrential rains, hurricanes, hail storms and the ubiquitous earthquake or two leaving grapes swollen and mouldy apples three deep and abandoned. Only feijoas, my favourite fruit, seem to have come through unscathed.

Inevitable, I guess, when the island you live on is long, skinny and at the bottom of the world with your nearest and dearest neighbour further away than London is to Athens, and when you have to travel nearly 7,000 miles before you hit South America. My point, however, is not to discourage you lot from emigrating or exporting but to highlight the cost and challenges of the New Zealand market for local producers.

Population is another problem – Britain is the same size but has 61 million fewer people. Imagine if you could get rid of all the cars, schools, waste and paraphernalia they generated. Even a Brexit fanatic can't imagine that, but with 33% of the population in Auckland (1.4 million) and Wellington, the same sizes as Bristol at 400,000, the population is spread so thinly I sometimes wonder if I am the only car on the road. So, food miles and distribution costs are high and with 15% GST (same as VAT) added to everything, including all food, it makes food very expensive in New Zealand.

For these reasons the majority of food is sold through two big retailers: Foodstuffs, which supplies 191 large stores and 189 Londis-type stores, and Progressive, which owns 183 Countdown stores. There are virtually no farm shops and barely 40 independent delis and cheese shops exist – less than the number of 2017 All Blacks (42) – so exporting premium British-made produce like artisan cheese to NZ is not as ridiculous as it might seem.

Cheddar totally dominates the market, with New Zealand artisan Cheddar retailing at $80-85/kg compared with Keens or Island of Mull at $100/kg, however New Zealand block or industrial Mature Cheddar has some very odd price points, ranging from $70/kg for a premium brand to $13-18/kg for the same cheese in a budget brand.

Blue cheese, perceived as something for sophisticated cheese lovers, comes in a distant second with the Danish Blue Castello at around $53-60/kg and NZ's favourite, triple cream Kikorangi Blue at $50-65/kg, the top sellers. Other New Zealand blues range from $33-75/kg, all mostly prepacked and many made with added cream and more salt than European blues. The most widely available imported blues are Tuxford & Tebbutt Stilton – available in NZ for as long as I can remember – which sells at $80-85/kg, St Agur at $95/kg, Gorgonzola Piccante $75/kg and Cropwell Bishop and Colston Bassett around $100/kg.

Then come Feta, Havarti and Camembert-type cheeses, which are made locally and vary from authentic to so far from the original it's hard to imagine what the cheesemaker was thinking. NZ "Parmesan" being the worst. Farmhouse Gouda, made by three Dutch families, is superb, and around a dozen artisan producers make excellent cheeses – most emulate Europe's finest, while some make unique individual cheeses but their market share is very small.

It's a small, close-knit, cut throat, supermarket-dominated market with a consumer base used to factory Cheddar, over salty blues and double cream Brie. But it's a market that still loves (almost) all things British, eating out and entertaining, so with the changes generated by Brexit you might want to explore the market Down Under – I can help you identify potential clients and cheeses (and other deli products) I think NZ'ers want or would buy.

> "With the changes generated by Brexit you might want to explore the market Down Under"

Talk cheese

New retail perspectives from industry experts



Rowcliffe Unveils New Brand Identity

Premium cheese importer and distributor Rowcliffe has unveiled a new logo and corporate branding to marks its 50th anniversary.

The rebranding reflects both the evolution of the company, as well as celebrates the roots of the business, states Rowcliffe.

The new logo is a dark blue colour with a hint of metallic bronze that the company believes "denotes quality and professionalism with a quiet confidence and understated authority". A refreshed stapline that states 'Quality Cheese and Fine Foods' highlights the company's catalogue expansion that now incorporates other quality produce, as well as cheese.

The new branding is being applied to marketing materials and company vehicles, with a new website soon to be launched.

The company was established in 1967 by Anthony Rowcliffe and has grown to become one of Britain's leading distributors of cheese to the independent trade. Over the years the offering has expanded to include premium charcuterie, olives, oils, vinegars, butters and fish.

Jo Mason, board director of Rowcliffe said, "Our aim is to ensure instant recognition of the Rowcliffe brand by bringing a cohesive and quality look and feel. We now have the toolbox of visual equities to faithfully communicate our quality range and expertise, whilst waving the flag for our artisanal producers. It's about ensuring that our identity communicates the quality of our unique offer. Our new branding champions every part of our business that contributes towards our success over the last 50 years and in the future."

Northern Irish Deli Opens Dedicated Cheese Room



Northern Ireland deli Indie Fude has opened a dedicated cheese room, the first of its kind in the country.

The County Down-based store was set up by Johnny McDowell in 2015 after his online deli drew attention due to its extensive Irish food and drink offering.

The Cheese Room in the bricks-and-mortar outlet acts as a showcase for the artisan cheeses of Ireland, with the shop selling 25 different varieties at any one time. Staff aim to keep the cheeses as fresh as possible and share in-depth information about the producers with customers.

Johnny McDowell, owner of Indie Fude said, "We decided to open the Cheese Room as there was a growing demand for local or Irish cheeses from our customers here in our store in Comber, as well as online. My wife Maggie used to work on a local cheese counter when she was at university – she has always been cheese daft – so I had to listen! In the last few years myself and another local cheesemaker, Christo Swanepoel of City Cheese, have been touring Northern Ireland and selling these wonderful Irish cheeses at markets and events, and the feedback has been outstanding. Our mantra has always been to sell great produce served at its prime, but also to keep it simple and not confuse the customer, so by having a range of 20 Irish cheeses they know what they are getting, remember the names and are coming back for more!"

Cheese Fears Lifted by Recent Studies

Eating aged cheeses like Parmesan, Cheddar and Brie could help boost life expectancy and prevent liver cancer, a study conducted by Texas A&M University has found.

The findings, which were published in the journal Cancer Research, uncovered that the cheeses contain a compound called spermidine which stops damaged liver cells from replicating, helping to prevent diseases like liver cancer.

Analysis from the spermidine treatment in mice was linked to a 24 per cent increase in life expectancy. Further research needs to be undertaken in humans, but scientists believe it could help us reach 100-years-old rather than 81, which is the current life expectancy.

Leyuan Liu, assistant professor at Texas A&M University said, "Severely cutting the number of calories consumed, restricting the amount of methionine (a type of amino acid found in meat and other proteins) in the diet and using the drug rapamycin have been shown to truly prolong the lifespan of vertebrates. But eating less and not eating meat will not be welcomed by the general population, while rapamycin has shown to suppress the human immune system – therefore, spermidine may be a better approach."

The findings follow newly-published research that reviewed 29 separate studies and involved almost a million participants that suggests consuming cheese, milk and yoghurt does not increase the risk of heart attack or stroke, as has previously been stated.

> "Consuming cheese, milk and yoghurt does not increase the risk of heart attack or stroke, as has previously been stated"



Belton Cheese Sets Sights on Further Growth with Rebrand

North Shropshire-based cheesemaker Belton Cheese has adopted a new name and visual identity as part of an ambitious growth strategy.

The company has switched its name to Belton Farm, running a strapline of 'Great British Cheesemakers' in its new logo.

The new visual identity will be rolled out across all aspects of the business, from signage to rebranded packaging in time for a planned enhanced programme of marketing activity.

The move marks a new stage in the development of the independent and family-run cheesemaker, as it aims to bolster its presence in the premium top tier and customer-label speciality cheese areas of the category, and to continue to grow its listings with UK retailers, wholesalers, delicatessen and cheesemongers.

The company has also stated that the rebrand will position it to develop further international sales following its rising presence in the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia and Europe.

The new branded packaging will start appearing in shops from the end of May.

Justin Beckett, managing director of Belton Farm said, "Cheese has been made here on the farm by the Beckett family for nearly a hundred years and we are immensely proud to be carrying on this tradition. The farm has become an iconic symbol of the fact that as cheesemakers we are grounded in both our heritage and our rural surroundings, and as such, our move to being called Belton Farm seems a natural development for the business. At the same time, our new and more contemporary visual identity will give us greater shelf presence, and we believe it will resonate strongly with both our existing consumers and make us more relevant and attractive to a new generation of discerning cheese buyers.

"We believe our new 'Belton Farm – Great British Cheesemakers' name and identity will highlight the provenance, professionalism and passion for making great tasting cheese that underpins everything we do. That Belton Farm's focus is on making the very best British cheese, whether this be classic regional 'crumblies', a comprehensive range of organic cheese or our distinctive take on contemporary 'Modern British' cheese."



Success for Sheep's Cheese at Artisan Cheese

Berkswell, a sheep's cheese produced by the Fletcher family of Ram Hall Farm, took the top spot of Supreme Champion at the Artisan Cheese Awards in Melton Mowbray.

The cheese also won gold in the Best Farmhouse Cheese and Best English Cheese categories.

24 accolades were handed out at the awards, with cheeses being recognised for texture, animal origin, raw milk, type and nationality.

Matthew O'Callaghan, organiser of the awards, noted that sheep's milk cheese is becoming increasingly more popular in Britain. He said, "Recently, more producers in Britain have started to produce sheep's cheeses, and the response from the public has been very encouraging."

Ann-Marie Dyas, co-founder of The Fine Cheese Co. said, "We've been selling Berkswell for around 30 years, which is almost as long as the Fletchers have been making it. It's a real testament to their continuing commitment to quality and raw milk cheese that they continue to win prestigious awards such as this."

The seventh Artisan Cheese Fair followed the awards, with 69 cheesemakers from the UK and Ireland selling their cheeses to visitors.



JUSTIN TUNSTALL RETAIL CONSULTANT

"The vinyl is final and the curd is the word"

Last weekend I was at a conference in a faraway city; one that I hadn't visited in over 20 years. With some time off on Saturday afternoon, I decided to explore. I'd 'done' the famous sights on previous visits, so I resolved to look at some shops. My diary noted that it was both Record Store Day (RSD2017) and Raw Milk Appreciation Day, so I thought that mixing and matching record shops and dels could be especially rewarding.

The independent record stores I went to were emblazoned with RSD promotional banners, and a healthy mob (mostly middle-aged blokes) trawled from shop to shop, going through the crates looking for vinyl gems released especially for the day. There was a palpable buzz in the air, and not just due to faulty wiring. Chain retailers aren't involved with the initiative, so I was unsurprised that RSD 2017 was not evident at HMV.

On the other hand, Raw Milk Appreciation Day (RMAD) wasn't well observed anywhere. I was unsurprised that supermarkets don't get behind it, but I'd have hoped for participation from the independent delis that I popped into. Not a sign of it, anywhere.

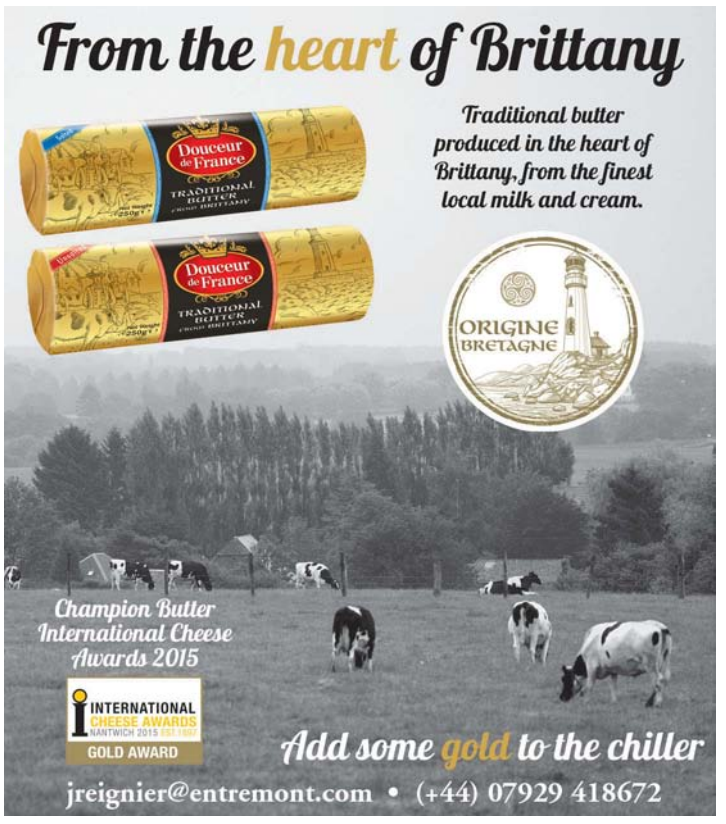
I talked with one deli owner about developments and trends in his market. He told me that his shoppers were responding to two major areas of his range: artisan cheeses and Continental classics that he was now sourcing direct from France. He mentioned that unpasteurised cheeses were particularly sought after, so I asked whether he'd got behind RMAD. Sadly, he was unaware of it.

Perhaps it's the use of the word 'raw' rather than 'unpasteurised' that causes little traction in the UK for this USA-developed but globally-promoted enterprise. My shop participated in 2015 and we found it worthwhile. Customers engaged with the idea and looked at the counter in a different way, sampling and buying cheeses that they'd not considered before. Staff were reminded of the 'raw' range and with that information at front of mind, no longer needed to double-check labelling for the tell tale 'U'. We were able to sell cheeses, such as territorials, that otherwise had little back-story to relate, as the RMAD focus gave them a particular interest on the day. We promoted RMAD as a key event for the month and it worked with added sales and more visitors.

I note that four respected cheese retailers in the UK really got behind the RMAD initiative this year and only sold unpasteurised cheeses on that day. That's a bold move and certainly would create great awareness among shop visitors – I'd have been nervous about missing out on sales of my pasteurised big sellers on a key trading day, but do admire their commitment.

Initiatives such as Raw Milk Appreciation Day are well worthy of support – if we keep an eye out for them, add the weight of our own promotional efforts to the wider work, then I know that awareness, footfall and sales can all grow.





PROMOTION



ARLA

HERITAGE, PASSION, CRAFT

Champion cheesemaking demands passion, skill and the richest locally-sourced milk

Here at Arla we're proud to support our award-winning creameries throughout the UK. Each boasts a rich cheesemaking heritage, each sources their milk from local farmers whenever possible, and each shares a passion for crafting only the finest British cheeses. Take our legendary creameries in Lockerbie and Taw Valley, for example. These two centres of cheesemaking excellence both produce their own unique varieties, but they both still share the same pride and passion for creating award-winning cheeses.

Lockerbie creamery, the pride of Scotland

Our Lockerbie creamery has been hand crafting Cheddar for 80 years and today's premises was opened by the Queen in 1975. The master cheesemakers here have got their recipes down to a fine art over the decades. And you can taste it in every chunk of their award-winning Cheddar – uniquely sweet and tangy with that famous 'wee bit of bite'.

Flavour to savour

Lockerbie Cheddars are matured for up to 12 months to deliver a beautiful balance of sweet and savoury notes. Add a creamy mouth-feel to complement the clean flavours, and you have something very special. Production manager Craig Hodgson is keen to point out: "It's all about getting the right balance. You have to hit the right level of moisture, acidity and salt to ensure you get the best quality of Cheddar."

The result? Distinctively unique Cheddars – and an overflowing awards cabinet. Indeed, the creamery won Best Scottish Cheese in a number of shows in 2016, including the renowned British Cheese Awards and the Royal Highland Show..

Taw Valley creamery, the Devonshire legend

Another one of our Cheddar creameries is the iconic Taw Valley creamery, based in Devon. Patience is certainly a virtue as some of the creamery's vintage Cheddars are matured for 18 months to develop a tantalisingly sweet flavour.

The attention to detail is key, with every recipe finely tweaked to satisfy each customer. "We check the cheese at every stage of the maturation process to ensure it has the right flavour profile – right body, right texture – for our customers," commented Grader Hayley Collins to emphasize the point.

The creamery's skill has not gone unnoticed as Taw Valley have yet again managed to win the highly sort after Danisco Grand Prix award, an award they have consecutively won for the past three years.

Embracing changing consumer tastes

Tradition may lie at the heart of this creamery, but it's also quick to embrace new ideas and technology. That's especially true when it comes to satisfying new market trends. Indeed, their Innovations Team has been working with great success to produce reduced fat cheeses that deliver the punchy flavour of classic Cheddar.

Discover more about Arla Cheese today

Finding out more about the fascinating Arla Cheese story is easy. Simply go to arlacheese.co.uk and read all about our other award-winning creameries and how we craft the finest champion cheeses.
After all, it's what we do best.

arlacheese.co.uk



THE RISE OF CHARCUTERIE

The booming British charcuterie market is ripe for exploration

It will come as a surprise to few that the British charcuterie market is in fine fettle. Buoyed by the increasing consumer passion for quality, craft and provenance, charcuterie producers are expanding and experimenting at a rate which is satisfying to see.

As Sean Cannon, co-founder of Cannon & Cannon attests later on in this feature, charcuterie will always be a premium product – and that's no bad thing for retailers of fine food. Yes, supermarkets are selling charcuterie cheaper than it is viable for indies to manage, but this is a valuable opportunity to show your principles off to great effect. If you're lucky, you'll have a local charcuterie producer who you could partner up with in the form of tasting events and co-promotion to spread understanding of the value of great charcuterie – fine quality charcuterie, as with many other foods, is instantly distinguishable from its cheaper counterparts.

If you haven't yet dipped your toe into charcuterie waters, so to speak, getting a producer on board will help. If that's not possible, see if you can visit one nearby to learn their story. Charcuterie, just like meat in the butcher's counter, shines – and sells – best when its story is told. You don't need to know the full details, necessarily, but conveying simple information about the provenance of the meat and the story behind the producers will work wonders.

Cash in on occasions

Everyone knows the delights of a cheeseboard, but a charcuterie platter will prove to be a popular centrepiece at your customers' gatherings and prove a profitable venture to boot. Get to know the various options available, familiarise yourself with their flavour notes and explore your antipasti selection to find matches. A creamy nocellara olive could go well with a sweetly soft prosciutto, for example, or a punchy sunblushed tomato with an equally flavoursome salami. Offer your customers the full package and you'll be their go-to when they're planning a gathering (or just fancy adding something a bit special to a picnic) – complementary cheeses and pickles have upselling potential, as do crispbreads and grissini. Perhaps even add a selection of wooden boards to your non-food offering – they'll work both in this instance and be a good gifting option, too.

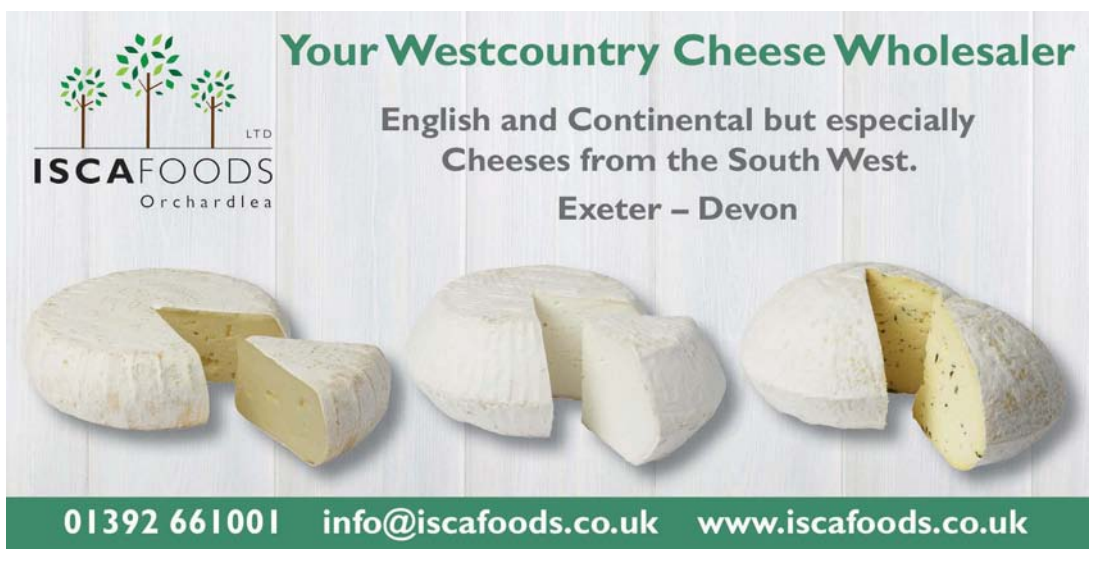
Speaking of gifts, dedicated foodies relish an opportunity to make their own food and drink from scratch, and as such will appreciate the culinary adventure offered by Ross & Ross Food's Homemade Bacon Curing Kit.

"The DIY food trend is continuing to soar and people care far more about the use of British produce and the source of their meat," says Ross Bearman, co-founder. "Supporting local butchers and experimenting with food are the key ingredients to getting people in the kitchen and making homemade meals," he says.

Gourmet snacking

Made For Drink was first born from a firmly held belief held by Daniel Featherstone that there existed

> "In the end it is all about quality – so kudos to those fantastic British-based wholesalers of European charcuterie who have stuck rigidly to quality and despite seeing prices go up have fantastic, consistent product to hang their hats on and loyal customers who trust them to boot"



in the UK a genuine opening to create a new breed of discerning charcuterie-themed snacks. The fine food enthusiast was certainly better placed than most (he had previously worked as a marketer for a global snacking heavyweight) to recognise that, contrary to traditional pub mythology, there was more to meaningful snacking appreciation than potato crisps or nuts.

Daniel's vision was to set up a family-owned artisan snackery to champion a new wave of bold yet substantial snacks packed with involving flavours and genuine foodie gravitas. Duck Fritons (inspired by Fritons de Canard from Gascony) and Chorizo Thins (inspired by Daniel's own personal obsession to create the finest gastronomic chorizo crisp) would be the first two moreish nibbles to market; two mouthwatering treats of a meaty persuasion packed with best-in-class ingredients and absolutely no artificial anything.

According to Daniel, "My aim from day one was to make the snacks in our pubs, bars and hotels as tempting and delicious as the drinks (craft beers, gins and low sulphur wines) now on offer behind the bar. In particular, I look to other countries' drinking cultures to uncover thoughtful speciality bites that go brilliantly with a drink."

Daniel concludes by stressing that his family-owned Made for Drink business embraces the simple, no-nonsense mantra of: "good food, good drink and good company. After all, classy nibbles should never be a chore, an afterthought or a quick fix scoff but an integral element of any great night out with friends or family."



"QUALITY WILL TELL OVER TIME"

Sean Cannon, Cannon & Cannon

Living and working in London and being so connected to the food world (especially having our HQ at Borough Market), one is viscerally aware of the fluctuating mood of the food supply chain. Our warehouse is sandwiched between two excellent fruit and veg wholesalers, which is always interesting as we occupy connected but almost entirely different businesses. Supplying in volume commodoties like fruit, veg, bread or wine can be a very tough game. It is all too easy for wholesalers to get drawn down into price wars and suffer terrifying hits to their margin in order to remain competitive and retain business. Food wholesalers have a key choice: to be premium and to focus only on quality or to look for big volume and get into the slippery slope of volume discounting. Unfortunately for buyers looking for that volume deal, as with most things in life – you get what you pay for. It may take time to filter through the system but buyers and chefs must be clear: if you bully down prices then in the end it will be the product (and therefore the customer) that suffers.

Charcuterie remains a premium product for obvious reasons – it is expensive to make. British charcuterie traditionally has been a super premium product – so much so that it has been only viable for niche, high end businesses. It has sat alongside pata negra ham, culatello and the finest prosciutto in terms of price and yet has nothing of those hams' fame to justify its price tag.

Things are changing though and European charcuterie is on average seeing an 8% rise in prices into the UK – whilst British cured meats are starting to go down in price. Our very own latest trade price list had no price increases at all and quite a number of decreases, which is a first for us.

Those UK based wholesalers of European charcuterie who have pumped suppliers tirelessly creating the glut we now have of cheap, inferior European cured meats (have you seen the Spanish supermarkets in the last year or two with bins of whole legs of serrano ham for £20?) which are now not even that much cheaper than our own British cuts are starting to realise that in the end it is not all about price. In the end it is all about quality – so kudos to those fantastic British-based wholesalers of European charcuterie who have stuck rigidly to quality and despite seeing prices go up have fantastic, consistent product to hang their hats on and loyal customers who trust them to boot.

My friends in European charcuterie wholesale companies tell me that despite the pressure on pricing, the classics are selling well and the luxury end even better than usual. Truffle salami is apparently seeing a big upsurge, for example.

Quality will tell over time. It is never the quick win, easy option for business but if you stick to your guns and back products you truly believe in then customers will stick with you and go on the journey with your business. But beware the heavy discounter, the volume deal, the dreaded BOGOF – it'll all come out in the wash and it will be quality that is drained away.



STOCK CHECK

SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE • 2017 •



THE BATH PIG AIR DRIED HAM
Traditionally cured pork sausage blended with an authentic selection of herbs and spices.
thebathpig.com



TREALY FARM LAMB CARPACCIO
Cured with a hint of rosemary, fermented, and then gently air-dried to a delicate, soft texture.
trealyfarm.com



GREAT GLEN VENISON CARPACCIO
Dry cured prime cuts of wild venison matured for three months.
greatglencharcuterie.com



MARSH PIG CHILLI BEEF JERKY
Layers of umami flavours with a definite chilli overtone, an amazing alternative to a bag of crisps.
marshpig.co.uk



THE REAL CURE SLOE GARLIC SALAMI
A combination of foraged sloes with fresh garlic, smoked over oak chips for three days.
therealcure.co.uk



WOODALL'S ROYALE HAM
With classically British flavours this rich, sweetly flavoured ham has a unique, unmistakeable personality.
woodallscharcuterie.co.uk



GOOD GAME TOPSHAM COPPA
A classic Italian style air dried ham from the top loin of a pig.
good-game.co.uk



THREE LITTLE PIGS SPICY CHORIZO
Rare breed pork combined with Spanish La Vera Smoked Pimenton and selected herbs and spices to produce a moderately spicy chorizo.
threelittlepigschorizo.co.uk



CORNISH CHARCUTERIE PORK RILLETTE
Made of pork from lop pigs, slow poached in duck fat, shredded and lightly seasoned to enhance the flavour of the meat, not disguise it.
cornishcharcuterie.co.uk



LANE FARM SUFFOLK SALAMI WITH FENNEL
Taking the finest cuts of pork we add salt, spices, garlic and fennel seeds, then hang them to air dry until they are ready to eat.
suffolksalami.co.uk

WHY GO SMOKED?

As smoked foods go through a rennaisance, not least for the summer season, we look at the innovators making their mark



Smoked foods have long played an important part in the fine food stable, with smoked fish in particular a standout favourite for generations. Smoked salmon has been a favourite at gatherings – and as an indulgent treat on non-celebration days – for as long as one can remember, and smoked pâtés have ably followed in its footsteps. Smoked cheese has also been a stalwart of the cheese counter for years, but it's not just the sausage-shaped, chemically smoked Bavarian cheese holding the fort these days; smoked Cheddars such as those from Quicke's, Montgomery and Godminster have earned themselves secure positions in cheese counters across the UK, and cheesemakers of all shapes and sizes are branching out into smoked – Yorkshire business Ribblesdale, for example, is making waves with its impressive smoked goats cheese, and The Artisan Smokehouse's smoked Halloumi has loyal fans.

Innovation

It's not just fish and cheese getting the smoked treatment at right now. Adventurous bakers can now try their hand at making smoked cakes, biscuits, fudge and the like thanks to Smoky Brae's inventive smoked sugar, and Halen Môn has taken the innovation scale up a notch with its surprisingly versatile smoked water. Also proving its avant-garde credentials is Chase Distillery; its smoked vodka is not only entirely produced on the farm, but it can be enjoyed in a number of ways – from neat, paired with food to playing the star in a Bloody Mary.

Do it yourself

The DIY trend finds a comfortable home in the smoked sector – keen foodies can easily find affordable, small-scale smoking equipment online, and it's easier than you might think to order a variety of wood chips to help concientious home smokers develop their own signature smoky flavour. If you have an established cookware – or garden – section in your establishment, or have room to create one if only as an experiment, selling one or two smokers (one basic and cheaper, one more involved and higher-priced) plus a few wood chip 'flavours' may serve you well. As yet this trend may be adopted in the main by dedicated foodies, but with a bit of blurb or member of staff on-hand to explain the whys and wherefores you could soon grow a reputation as a go-to destination for an all-round culinary experience. Now's a great time to look into this, with the popularity of barbecues and their accoutrements well on the rise for summer.

On trend

It's not only during the summer season that smoked foods are popular; indeed, smoked cheese enjoys year-round customer appeal. "Our Smoked Superior Goat is very popular year round, not just at Christmas," says Iona Hill, owner of Ribblesdale Cheese. "We smoke it ourselves in our little Maxi Afos, which takes 36 cheeses in total, so it certainly has small-batch credentials. We use oak chippings from Theakston Brewery who still have a cooper who works with oak barrels they buy from a whisky distillery in Scotland." Not only does this cheese tick the box when it comes to flavour, but it's sustainably-minded, too. Iona explains, "This is a lovely story about how one person's waste is not waste to us at all, and helps us create a wonderful, sweet, caramel-like smell and flavour."

THE NATURAL WAY

Godminster Oak-Smoked Vintage Organic Cheddar is not only a delicious take on a firm favourite, but its natural credentials make it a must-buy for sustainability-conscious consumers

Godminster's award-winning Oak-Smoked Vintage Organic Cheddar has been enjoying increased popularity. Shoppers' interest in the trend for naturally smoked food has been driven by smoking as a natural way of preserving food, the rise of Nordic cuisine and food writers popularising it, such as Diana Henry's cookbook *Salt, Sugar, Smoke* and Tim Hayward's *Food DIY*.

Godminster's Oak-Smoked Cheddar uses the same 12-month Vintage Organic Cheddar made to a 90-year-old recipe that shoppers can usually buy enrobed in their distinctive burgundy wax. The Cheddar is cold smoked for eight to 10 hours over oak chippings sourced from sustainable British woodland.

Jessica Kimber-Holloway, Godminster's operations director says, "Many modern smoked products are flavoured using artificial flavourings and colours but we prefer to do things the natural way. The cold smoking ensures the cheese absorbs the smoke and is not affected by any heat. This process gives the cheese an intense flavour and an aroma that complements the rich, creamy texture of the cheese and delivers a pleasant smoky aftertaste. It is one of only a handful of naturally smoked Cheddars in Britain, and we've had great feedback on it from our customers making it a firm favourite."

The Oak-Smoked Vintage Organic Cheddar has won several awards including gold at the annual International Cheese Awards, where it was commended by judges for its "natural smoky flavour and smooth texture".

Jessica continues, "Many of our customers enjoy our Oak-Smoked Cheddar on its own but more recently we're seeing it used as an ingredient in a wide variety of recipes, too, from artisan burgers to smoky mac and cheese dishes. It is really versatile and brings a different dimension to whatever it is added to."

As shoppers have become increasingly interested in provenance, Godminster has found itself well-placed to share its story. Godminster has a reputation for producing great-tasting cheese and Godminster's Oak-Smoked Vintage Organic Cheddar is the result of years of experience, hard work and first class organic milk which combine to maintain this reputation.





5 MUST-STOCKS

Tim Matthews, founder of The Artisan Smokehouse shares his favourite smoked foods

I love smoked food, in fact I nearly make a living out of it! All of our smoked products are made by me in small batches using maple wood, which gives a slightly sweet edge to a very savoury product. My favourites are perhaps not all those you would expect from a committed carnivore like myself. I enjoy the depth of flavour a well smoked food can add as an ingredient as much as I enjoy the finished article.

- **Smoked Olive Oil:** delicious as a dressing paired with some fabulous rich balsamic
- **Smoked Mushrooms:** a fabulous base for a stew or casserole, this is a must-have storecupboard ingredient in my house. Rehydrate with boiling water and leave for 20 mins, blitz and use as a rich dark mushroomy stock
- **Smoked Garlic:** roast whole in its skin (with more oil than you're happy about using) in tinfoil for 30 minutes. Allow to cool then pop it in a potato ricer and squeeze out the smokey, sweet, garlicy loveliness. Keep in a ramekin in the fridge with a layer of oil over the top and add a spoonful to mash or a baked Camembert
- **Smoked Stilton:** we use a rich, creamy small-batch Stilton. The smoking takes away the bitterness, leaving a creamy, rich, subtly smoky maple wood taste. I blend this up with some cream and walnuts, make a paste then let it melt into a rare steak
- **Smoked Beef Fillet Carpaccio:** our most prestigious product, winner in my dish for Young British Foodies as well as three stars in the Great Taste Awards. Local fillet steak, lightly cured, then smoked and then sliced

STOCK CHECK 2017 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



CHASE SMOKED VODKA

We leave water from our borehole in the smokehouse until it picks up a delicate smoky flavour, then blend it with our award winning vodka to achieve a sweet, smoky finish.

williamschase.co.uk



THE BAY TREE CHIPOTLE SAUCE

A hot and smoky Mexican-inspired addition. Can be used as a marinade, or just dollop it on a burger for a true taste sensation.

thebaytree.co.uk



SMOKY BRAE SMOKED SUGAR

Naturally smoked and handmade in small batches, now you can make smoky fudge, caramel, marshmallows, chocolate, ice cream, cocktails, cures and rubs.

smokybrae.com



CORNISH SEA SALT CO. SMOKED SEA SALT

The natural freshness of salt combined with a subtle barbecue tang transforms food, intensifying savouring flavours and adding an unexpected twist to desserts.

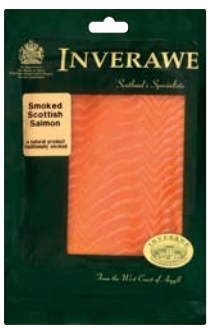
cornishseasalt.co.uk



HALEN MÔN OAK SMOKED WATER

A natural, clean-label ingredient which adds depth and savoury flavour to a huge range of food and drinks from flatbreads to risottos, marinades to whiskies.

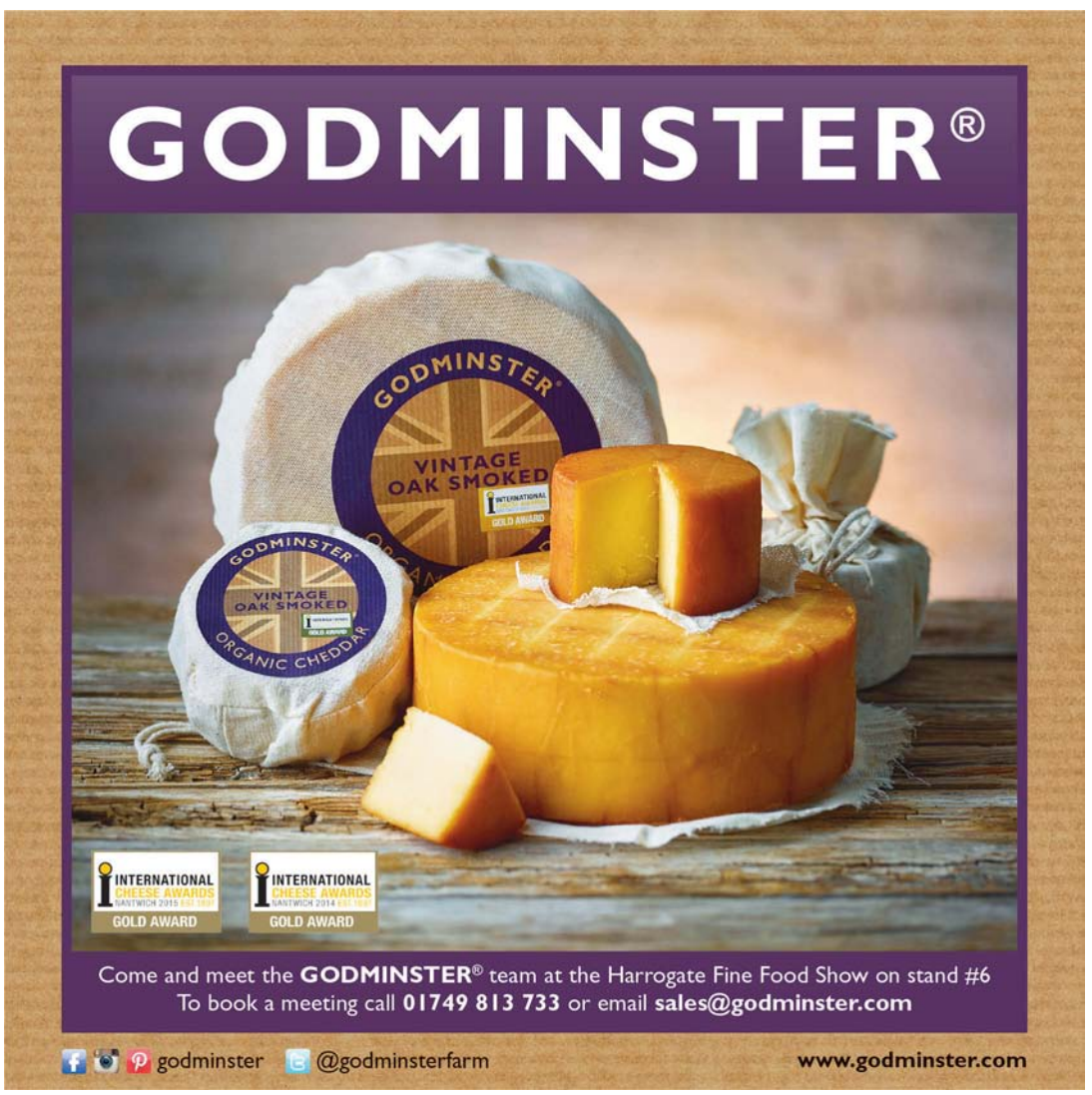
halenmon.com



INVERAWE SMOKED SALMON

An award-winning classic, smoked in old-style brick kilns.

smokedsalmon.co.uk





THE CENTI

Satisfy your customers' cravings for alfresco dining with this barbecue-inspired fine food selection



1 GORDON RHODES WICKED HOT RUBS

Blow off your espadrilles this summer with this free-from and award-winning range. Available in three fiery varieties, Chipotle, Scotch Bonnet or Habanero, the hot rubs are ideal for barbecues or as a treat for any meat. They are gluten-free.

gordonrhodes.co.uk



2 STOKES TOMATO KETCHUP

After grilling a succulent burger or gourmet hotdog, it's important that the condiment you choose can take your creation to the next level. Stokes Tomato Ketchup is capable of doing just that. Each 300g bottle is jam-packed with juicy Italian tomatoes – this award-winning sauce is the perfect addition to any expertly-curated barbecue.

stokesauces.co.uk



3 DALSTON'S SODAS

Dalston's mission is to produce better tasting sodas that are made from honest ingredients – the brand's new range of canned drinks succeed in this quest. The three flavours available are Orangeade, Lemonade and classic Dalston Cola, and are made with natural ingredients and contain no nasties, with less sugar than other soft drinks.

dalstoncola.co.uk

RE SPREAD



4 COTTAGE DELIGHT HICKORY SMOKED BARBECUE SAUCE



"This sweet and smoky-flavoured sauce is inspired by a classic recipe from the southern states of America," says Liam Kerr, marketing assistant at Cottage Delight. "It is the perfect accompaniment to any barbecued meats and especially delicious as a glaze for ribs, brushed over steaks or served with sausages."

cottagedelight.co.uk

5 MUSK'S NEWMARKET SAUSAGES



Musk's sausages contain pork shoulder meat and special seasoning to create outstanding succulence, texture and flavour. All varieties are available in retail packs or loose for chefs. Top tip: don't pierce them before you barbecue them or you will let all of the juices out.

musks.com

6 ATKINS & POTTS CHIPOTLE CHILLI MAYONNAISE



This mayonnaise has a deliciously spicy and smoky flavour. It is capable of transforming wraps, burgers, kebabs and sausage sandwiches, and makes for a scrumptious dip with wedges. If you're catering for vegetarians, it also adds a delicious flavour to falafel or veggie burgers, and lends coleslaw or potato salad a smoky edge.

atkinsandpotts.co.uk

7 SHEPPY'S CLASSIC DRAUGHT CIDER



Sheppy's Classic Draught is a light, crisp and refreshing premium cider. A sizzling accompaniment to barbecues, it is perfect for pairing with hot and cold dishes. Sheppy's is one of the oldest and most distinguished cider-making families in the world. The real Somerset ciders are made by master of cider, David Sheppy, using knowledge passed down through six generations.

sheppys-speciality.co.uk



SPOTLIGHT ON: CONDIMENTS

Excite your customers – and your sales – with a thoroughly modern condiment offering

Quality condiments are a mainstay of the independent food retailer, and with good reason. Not only are they at a price point which means they're an affordable addition to your customers' cupboards, but they come in a myriad of guises – from can't-do-without accompaniments to a classic roast like horseradish and mint sauce, to internationally-inspired, fragrant concoctions which will jazz up any meal – so there's no excuse to leave your condiments shelf dusty and stale.

It's all too easy to leave condiments languishing in a corner, waiting for a jar to catch the eye of a consumer casually perusing the ambient section, but to do so would be to doubt the culinary punch these items can offer. From chilli-packed products and artisan mustards to luxury versions of staples, once you look further into condiments you'll find a whole world of flavour to explore.

Ketchup is a classic which is always worth stocking, but the impressive sales of Foraging Fox's Beetroot Ketchup has demonstrated that consumers are open-minded when it comes to trying variations on their favourites. Test their tastebuds with Aphrodite's Pomegranate Ketçhup – both innovative and versatile, it's sure to become a modern day staple. Its versatility is a major selling point; not only is it delicious used as a traditional condiment, but it's also great as a dip and used as an ingredient in cooking.

You may consider your condiment section to be seasonality-free, a portion of your establishment which can be left to tick along nicely in the background, but you might be surprised to find that it could be a hotbed of sales with a bit of extra thought. Some ideas are obvious – bring barbecue sauces and the like to the fore during the summer season, and highlight colder season staples like cranberry sauce when consumers' minds turn to wintery roasts.

Condiments also have rich upselling potential. It goes without saying that you should offer chutney to a customer buying cheese, but how about offering sweet chilli jam to one buying stir fry ingredients? Redcurrant jelly to a customer preparing a lamb casserole? Open their minds to the versatility of the condiments you stock and you'll boost both their foodie excitement and your sales.

One retailer successfully cashing in on condiments is The High





Street Delicatessen in Newtown, Powys. Barrie Thomson, owner explains, "While there is a seasonal dimension to condiments at The High Street Delicatessen, there is a good all-year-round rhythm to sales."

The retailer is loyal to producers they can trust to bring out great items. "We tend to select producers we love and then get behind their range," he says. For example, "James and Pam Digva are producing great condiments at the Sauce Shop. Their Sriracha won a Great Taste Gold Star in 2016 but the whole range gets plaudits from our customers (Mr Deli loves the Lime & Coriander which adds 'zing' to seafood). James and Nicola at Bims Kitchen produce mouth-tingling African-inspired condiments (in addition to their curry sauce range) – check out the very high chilli heat of their Sweet African Tigernut and Chilli Sauce! We also love the foraged alchemy of Liz Knight and her Forage Fine Foods. The hedgerow offerings of Pontack Sauce, Hawberry Ketchup or Rosehip & Horseradish dipping sauce; all add unique and great tasting interest to our shelves. All show the variety and versatility of sauces as they are perfect for dipping as much as they are the magical ingredient in a casserole or drizzled on meat or fish."

When it comes to refreshing the deli's offering, says Barrie, "Seasonal variations are useful to add something a little different for regular customers – hopefully, we'll get a great BBQ season this year. We're already excited about the new Sauce Shop mayo range (the chipotle mayo is bliss with chips!)."



"THE DREAM OF THE SPECIALITY FOOD RETAILER"

John Shepherd, MD of Partridges

As we all know, condiments play an important role in the life of the speciality food shop. Some condiments may be boring, some may be traditional, some may be slow movers and some may be plain daft, but many are also steady sellers throughout the year and popular with customers of all ages and cultural backgrounds. So what exactly are condiments?

At Partridges the main products that we define as condiments are: mustards, mayonnaise, pickles, ketchup, soy sauce, chilli sauces, BBQ sauces, worcestershire sauce, horseradish sauce and salad dressings. We tend to consider oils and vinegars, pasta sauces, spices and dips to be in a different category.

In many ways, condiments are the dream of the speciality food retailer. Relatively inexpensive and popular, with a long shelf life in most cases, and often with an upmarket image, they repose on the shelves untroubled from one year to the next and sell steadily or tick over throughout. There are seasonal highs and lows, of course. We are now in the mayonnaise and dressings season, and Gentleman's Relish and ketchup are in retreat. Seasonality does play a part. We once got our fingers burnt by hollandaise sauce, to coin a phrase. In those days we collected our asparagus directly from a farm in Kent, and as new season asparagus was highly sought after we launched our own-label hollandaise to accompany it, which sold brilliantly for three weeks. Once the asparagus season was over, however, the hollandaise was like a leading actor with no lines who ends up being an extra. Our other own-label condiments have done better overall, I am pleased to report, and three are in the best-sellers list: white truffle mustard, horseradish and piccallili.

Despite our hollandaise experience, it is notable that so many condiments sell consistently throughout the seasons. Our leading condiment for the year so far turns out to be a mayonnaise followed in the top 10 by a mustard, a ketchup, a vinaigrette, good old Partridges white truffle mustard, soy sauce, worcestershire sauce, Tabasco, horseradish and piccallili. The brand names we sell mostly tend to be traditional, for example Thomy, Hellman's, Briannas, Newman's, Heinz for the tomato ketchup, Kikkoman, Lea & Perrins, Maille and Colman's, but it is good to see new names are appearing on the best-sellers list such as Hastings and our own Startisan supplier Nonya Secrets.

One area that has surprised me during the course of this research has been the American section. The salsas and dressings tick over but we have numerous facings of barbecue sauces. Why not? They are attractively packaged, not available in many other places and charismatic on the shelf. The only problem is they do not sell well. This might be a Partridges thing or a Chelsea thing or a lack of patios thing. Further research will definitely be needed. Our sales of American products are in the main great, but for us the barbecue is over!

> "The brand names we sell mostly tend to be traditional, for example Lea & Perrins, Maille and Colman's, but it is good to see new names appearing on the best-sellers list"

STOCK CHECK



NEWTON & POTT PICCALLILI
A spiced twist on a classic, with crunchy vegetables, turmeric and coriander seeds in a mustard sauce.
newtonandpott.co.uk



THE BAY TREE RED ONION MARMALADE
This sticky savoury marmalade is a delicious accompaniment to soft cheese and superb as an ingredient in sauces.
thebaytree.co.uk



STOKES TOMATO KETCHUP
Packed with juicy Italian tomatoes, Stokes Tomato Ketchup is perfect with all kinds of deli and farm shop produces, especially meat dishes.
stokessauces.co.uk



BUCKSHOT ORIGINAL BARBECUE SAUCE
A British take on the American classic. Everything it should be: sweet, spicy, smokey and sticky.
buckshotoriginal.com



APHRODITE'S POMEGRANATE KETÇHUP
A deliciously unique a versatile sauce made with 100% pure pomegranate molasses, tomato and sweet spices.
aphroditesfood.com



TRUFFLE HUNTER BLACK TRUFFLE MAYONNAISE
Made using Truffle Hunter's own minced black truffles, expertly folded through a free-range egg mayonnaise.
trufflehunter.co.uk





CHILLI HOTS UP

As the British palate becomes increasingly adventurous, now's the time to experiment with chilli. Three chilli-centric industry experts tell us how

Thomasina Miers, cook, writer and television presenter, is passionate about chillies. Not only has she written countless chilli-inspired recipes but she has is the founder of Wahaca, a chain of Mexican street food restaurants bringing the joy of chilli to the public



"Chillies add amazing flavour to food – it's not really about heat as taste. They add an enormous depth of flavour, particularly dried chillies. Fresh chillies are great as a seasoning – in the same way as pepper does, they bring out the flavour of food and offer spikes of sparkle in food like lemon juice or vinegar does. There are about 200 types of chilli in Mexico, all with different flavour notes which are used in different dishes in each region. When you actually come to cook with chilli, the food doesn't need to be hot – you can add accents of heat according to your tastebuds. In a warming, wintery lamb stew you might add an ancho chilli, or with a beef or venison a pasilla chilli which has more raisin notes.

"When we opened Wahaca in 2006-2007, even my Mexican food supplier didn't know what a chipotle chilli was. Unfortunately, the Government has recently put a ban on importing smoked chillies so it's hard to find chipotle chillies at the moment, as well as the really exciting pasilla and oaxaca chillies, which is a real shame.

"The British consumer is travelling more and bringing back with them tastes for Sri Lankan, Southern Indian street food, Thai, Vietnamese and Mexican food among others, so there's more demand to come!"

Tasneem Backhouse, managing director of EHL Ingredients knows better than many the value of chillies. As the head of a supplier of blends, rubs, marinades and natural food ingredients, she has seen firsthand the increase in popularity of spicy foods – and as a result their increase in sales



"Chilli ingredients are used in a wide range of EHL's products," she says, "and varieties sourced include habanero, jalapeno, chipotle, morita pepper, guajillo, scotch

"A POOL OF SPICE AND FLAVOUR AWAITS CONSUMERS"

Martin Bond, Wiltshire Chilli Farm

Britain's appetite for chilli has changed dramatically since The Wiltshire Chilli Farm began. Where once we would have to stand in front of a confused customer at Swindon Farmer's Market explaining that 'chilli sauce' did not necessarily mean that the result of a taste-test would be a melted face, over recent years we have a great deal more people wanting to learn about the subtle differences between a Golden Bonnet and a Chocolate Habanero chilli pepper or how best they can use the variety of products on offer in and on everyday food.

Some time around late 2013, the large media outlets were very excited about the fact that a new sauce had been making a huge impact in the United States – that sauce was Sriracha. Due to complaints from locals to the factory about strong smells the production had been temporarily shut down, and due to the high demand for the garlicky southeast Asian-inspired sauce style there was a lot of buzz about this tough-to-find product. Since then 'America's favourite sauce' has continued in popularity, to the point that you can find it in supermarkets in the UK as a standard alongside other staple sauces. While this is an indicator of an increase in tolerance for chilli it is hardly a giant leap in culinary exploration, but these things don't move fast and so in the following four years we have found a slow but steady increase in people that are ditching ketchup and Worcestershire sauce in favour of something a little more daring and a little more interesting.

As a nation with decades of curry eating behind us, we have never been against the idea of a little spice – even if it did take early pioneers of the cuisine the option of chips on the menu to encourage us to brave the at-the-time new foods. In our experience people like to fall back on what is familiar, so we find that our Sweet Chilli Sauce is often a go-to option for those taking their first steps outside of the supermarket standards and into something a little more interesting to accompany their dinner. Sweet chilli sauces in general were growing at a faster rate in the condiments area than any other in the UK not so long ago, while sales of mayonnaise and other traditional sauces have recorded a drop. Over the years that the chilli sauce producers in the UK have celebrated this rise in interest and sales, it is the sweet chilli that is considered the 'gateway sauce' by many. It brings people out of their comfort zones with just a dip of the toe in to the pool of spice and flavour that lies ahead of them.

Once we have you hooked, it is our job as sauce producers to show you just how wonderful and multi-purpose chilli products can be. When I get told that it is too early for chilli I generally respond by informing the customers that I enjoy our cranberry chilli jam in porridge for breakfast! People see the value in adding something different to an otherwise mundane meal and are therefore always looking to innovate when putting together their meals; that is facilitated by the abundance of great sauces available in the UK at the moment.







bonnet, cayenne, bird's eye, sanam and gunter." When it comes to top sellers, "Chipotle chillies are the most popular variety, and are sold whole, powdered and crushed by EHL, as well as included in several blends," she says. The brand has witnessed a 40% surge in enquiries for scotch bonnet and habanero chillies, "both particularly spicy varieties that can be used in curry dishes from South America, the Middle East, India and the Caribbean."

Chilli as an ingredient is utilised across the world, in a number of guises – from rubs, coatings and seasonings to sauces and condiments. Blends with spicy flavour profiles are proving popular, with, Tasneem says, "Mexican adobo, Creole, West Indian jerk and harissa showing increased sales growth. Consumers are experiencing and enjoying cuisines from around the world more and more, and it's important for manufacturers to recognise this trend and develop dishes with an extra-hot option."

According to Tasneem, "The growing popularity of spicy food ingredients can be attributed to the new wave of positive media coverage received this year, which highlights the health benefits of capsaicin, a compound found in chilli peppers that gives them their heat. Research by Ruhr University has found that this compound has the ability to kill various different types of cancer cells including breast, bone, colon, bowel and pancreatic cancers."

EHL predicts that demand for increasingly spicy ingredients and blends will continue to grow throughout 2017, with hotter and more interesting varieties being sought out by consumers.

> "Chilli flavours are in real demand. We're becoming more accustomed to hotter tastes. Chutneys and jellies are a great way to help consumers introduce their preferred level of heat into a dish, one dollop at a time"
>
> **EMMA MACDONALD, FOUNDER OF THE BAY TREE**



STOCK CHECK



GRAN LUCHITO SMOKED CHILLI HONEY

Made with smoked Mexican Chipotle chillies and honey, this is a great way to give your BBQ a Mexican twist.

gran.luchito.com



DL JARDINE'S TEXAS ORIGINAL CHILLI MIX SPICY

A versatile blend of fresh tomatoes, onions and a unique seasoning and spice blend.

empirebespokefoods.com



BURTS THAI SWEET CHILLI CRISPS

A bagful of Asian flavour made with sweet Devon chillies blended with tangy lemongrass and a spicy zing of ginger.

burtschips.com



CREIGHTON'S CHILLI CHOCOLATE BAR

Chilli Chocolate, Dark chocolate bar with a hint of warming chilli.

wearecreightons.com



CHEEKY FOOD COMPANY CHILLI BANG-BANG PICKLE

Scotch bonnet, bullet and long green chillis mixed with fenugreek seeds, mustard seeds and fennel seeds.

cheekyfoodcompany.com



BAD BOY CHILLI HABANERO CHILLI SAUCE

Made from fresh habanero chillies, aged in oak whiskey casks for superior flavour.

badboychilli.co.uk



THE COCONUT KITCHEN CHILLI, GARLIC & BASIL STIR-FRY SAUCE

A medium spicy stir-fry sauce, packed full of flavour from roasted chilli and Thai basil.

thecoconutkitchen.co.uk



CHILLI PEPPER PETE DRAGON'S BLOOD HOT BBQ SAUCE

Hot, sweet, smoky and sticky – a perfectly balanced rich sauce or marinade and vital ingredient for any BBQ dish.

chillipepperpete.com



SCARLETT & MUSTARD CHILLI JAM

A delicious savoury jam packed with flavour, with a lovely chilli hit.

scarlettandmustard.co.uk



WICKED BLENDS PIRI PIRI RUB

This rub has a discreet blast of African bird's eye chilli, which gives a rich, warming spicy kick.

wickedblends.ie

OUTOF AFRICA

British consumers are becoming increasingly intrigued by African food – liven up your shelves with some of the best, says Abby Driver

As GDP rises and infrastructure improves, Africa is becoming an increasingly serious and powerful global trading partner. According to United Nations research, 65% of the continent's population is under the age of 35 and there is an emerging middle class.It's no surprise then that some of the world's biggest brands are already on board and launching ranges nuanced towards the African market.

Guinness launched Guinness Africa (blended with ginger, lemongrass and chilli) declaring it 'Made by Africans for Africa'; 75% of the ingredients were sourced from Nigeria and the ad campaign featured a Nigerian graffiti artist. Pizza Hut re-entered the African market and now boast 100 restaurants in 10 countries on the continent; they have just set the Guinness World Records title for the highest altitude pizza delivery on land, at a height of 19,341 feet when delivering a pizza up Mount Kilimanjaro! And Starbucks opened its doors for the first time in South Africa earlier this year, using coffee from nine countries in Africa.

Of course, this influence works both ways. Mintel, the world's leading market intelligence agency, has pinpointed African Food as a key food trend for European consumers. According to research, the number of food and drink products launched around the world including an African ingredient increased by 41% between 2011 and 2015.

If African exporters and brands can continue to mobilise, there is a huge potential for them to appeal

> “Even within Nigeria there’s a huge variety of dishes, many of which are unknown even to Nigerians themselves. There are between 250-350 ethnic groups in Nigeria, each with their own languages (not dialects), customs and food”

to premium, artisan and ethical markets in the UK. And from gourmet cocoa to ancient grains, the continent is packed with foodie delights to tickle UK consumers’ fancy.

“I often say that Black African food is the last unexplored frontier on the culinary map. We have a huge and varied cuisine, particularly when you focus on Nigeria with its myriad of ethnic groups,” says Nky Iweka. The trend forecast is great – but not new – news for Nky who is on a mission to introduce Nigerian food to the rest of the world through her recipe website (executivemamaput.com), her book *Quintessentially Efik Recipes: Foods of Nigeria* as well as organised events and cookouts.

So far she has found that the Nigerian food she serves has been a hit with new-to-the-cuisine-consumers. “The response has been amazing. I think people like the fact that we offer food that they have not tried before and that the menu is constantly changing,” says Nky. So what’s gone down a treat? Beef suya, roast yam, roast plantain and jollof are all core favourites. But it’s ready-to-eat food products, snacks and ingredients that are the bread and butter of most delis – so let’s look what Africa has to offer in that arena.

First things first – we are talking about an entire continent here, so we can’t possibly cover everything. “Even within Nigeria we have a huge variety of dishes, many of which are unknown even to Nigerians themselves. We have between 250-350 ethnic groups in Nigeria, each with their own languages (not dialects), customs and food,” explains Nky. So with that in mind, here are a few African exports we think would go down well with UK consumers.

Move over quinoa, there’s a new ancient grain in town. We’re talking about the fifth most important cereal crop in the world – sorghum. With the gluten-free market still booming, now could be the time for this naturally gluten-free grain to go mainstream in the UK. It’s digestive system friendly, bursting with antioxidants and vitamins and packed with protein to boot. If that wasn’t enough, it’s also an environmentally friendly choice – it’s drought tolerant and an acre of sorghum uses a third-less water than an acre of corn. Customers can cook with the grain directly or use sorghum flour for gluten-free baking. The millet-like grain is also sneaking its way into syrups, snack bars and even beer.

A millet grain that’s popular in Africa is pearl millet. In fact it’s so popular, it’s the most widely grown type of millet and has been grown in Africa since prehistoric times. It’s proved a useful crop as it’s able to withstand harsh weather conditions like droughts and floods. In northern Nigeria they turn into a drink called fura by grinding the millet into flour, rolling it into balls, parboiling it and then pulsing it into a water paste using fermented milk. While that specific delicacy might not be an obvious choice for customers, the grain can be used to bulk up pilaffs, stews and even cookies. Plus it’s also gluten free and a rich source of phosphorus.

You might have heard of samp – it’s dried white corn kernels that are stamped and chopped until broken, but crucially, not processed until they are as fine as mielie meal. While the finely milled mielie meal is cooked with water to create a sort of thick porridge, samp is used in many ways including umngqusho, which was supposedly one of Nelson Mandela’s favourite meals.

For something a bit meatier, consider ordering in some Biltong – a dried, cured meat which originated in South Africa. Common ingredients in addition to the meat include black pepper, coriander, salt, brown sugar and vinegar to give it a distinctive taste. Considering that protein is still a key concern for many consumers, biltong could make a great addition to your deli.

> THE NUMBER OF FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCTS LAUNCHED AROUND THE WORLD INCLUDING AN AFRICAN INGREDIENT INCREASED BY **41%** BETWEEN 2011 AND 2015

Speaking of flavour – there are myriad chutneys, sauces and marinades across Africa. One such sauce is chermoula – it’s made from a variation of herbs, oil, pickled lemon, garlic and cumin and one regional variation includes the addition of dark grape puree. It can be sold ready-made in jars, making this a very simple inroad to African cooking likely to appeal to time-poor customers.

On a similar note, most of us will have heard of, and probably used, harissa paste. While taking a road trip across North Africa, NPR Morning Edition host Steve Inskeep remarked that the red chilli pepper paste is as ubiquitous as ketchup is in America. The ingredients vary from place to place, but the basic recipe involves hot peppers, garlic, salt and olive oil. One ingredient you might not associate with the paste is rose but this is a popular addition in some regions.

You might associate rose flavouring with Middle Eastern cooking, but rose and rose water is often used across North Africa to add a sweet flavour to dishes. As such, the Mintel report suggested rose-infused nougats and jams as viable products. Similarly, orange blossom water, jasmine water and geranium water are also widely used. For rose-averse sweet tooths we recommend chocolate; Tanzania is an East African country home to Mount Kilimanjaro, epic safaris and chocolate.

A popular Nigerian sweet treat is chin chin, which is similar to the Scandinavian snack klenat. “It’s so good we named it twice,” says Nky. “It’s basically deep-fried sweetened dough, flavoured with cinnamon and nutmeg at its most basic.”

It might not go down with the health crowd (we’re looking at you, sugar and deep fat fryer), but what it lacks in health credentials it makes up for in delicious authenticity.

For a healthier snack that’s just as authentic, try plantains. A starchy, unsweet version of banana, it’s packed full of potassium along with vitamin A and C. They can be bought raw and cooked (steamed, boiled, grilled, baked or fried) as an accompaniment to main meals. Plantains can also be dried and ground into flour or boiled and blended with water, spices and sugar to make a drink. But our favourite option? Plantain chips.

Egusi is similar looking to a watermelon, but the flesh is dry and bitter. But fortunately it’s all about the seeds. Chocked full of protein and fat, the seeds are often simply shelled and enjoyed as a snack on their own. The seeds can also be soaked, fermented or boiled – each method gives the seed a different flavour. They can also be roasted and then ground into a seed spread, not dissimilar to peanut butter in texture. Often the seeds are ground down and used as the base to make a flavourful egusi soup. With a little more effort, you can turn egusi-seed meal into little patties to make a meat substitute.

You are likely familiar with tamarind, but did you know the tree itself is indigenous to tropical Africa? The pulp of the fruit is edible and once ripe it becomes sweeter and more palatable. It can be used in jam, juices, sorbets, chutney as well as flavouring for savoury-based meals such as stews and curries (it’s also one of the key ingredients in the popular worcestershire sauce).

From ready-made snacks such as chin chin or plantain crisps, to individual ingredients such as rose water or samp, there are plenty of choices when it comes to stocking your shelves with African delicacies. If you have gluten-free customers some of the grains would make an excellent addition, and protein-hungry customers will be big fans of biltong.

STOCK CHECK



CHIKA’S CHILLI PLANTAIN CRISPS

A good dose of chilli makes these plantain crisps extra moreish.

chikas.co.uk



PEPPER & STEW EGUSI STEW SAUCE

Take the hard work out of egusi seed paste with this simple ready-to-use stew sauce.

pepperandstew.com



T.A.S. TAMARIND DRINK

Tamarind paste is now widely available – stand out with a canned drink instead.

spicesofindia.co.uk



CRUGA BILTONG

This South African snack will go down with the high protein/low carb crowd.

jerky-house.com



TABITHA’S SNACKS CHIN CHIN

Sweet and crunchy, this popular African snack is sure to go down a treat with UK foodies.

beautifulfoods.co.uk



PROFUSION CHIA SORGHUM THINGS

The ancient grain is combined with crunchy chia seeds to create very snack-ready cracker thins.

biona.co.uk



CHOCOLATE MAMAS TANZANIAN CHOCOLATE

Reputed to be the first and only indigenous producer of fine Tanzanian chocolate.

chocolatemamas.com



CORTAS ROSE WATER

This gently perfumed water can be used to add intrigue to both sweet and savoury dishes.

finefoodspecialist.co.uk



BELAZU HARISSA PASTE

Rose harissa adds a kick of sweet smokiness and depth to stews, soups and couscous.

belazu.com



TROPICAL SUN WHITE HOMINY CORN

Perfect for adding substance to casseroles or making traditional samp and beans.

tropicalsunfoods.com

PREVIEW: THE BELLAVITA EXPO LONDON

Experience the excellence of Italian cuisine with the help of food and drink experts and top chefs at this year's Bellavita Expo



The rich bounty of Italian produce is well-known and respected throughout the world, from delicious wines and beverages, indulgent chocolates, the finest selections of cured meats, artisan cheese and bespoke aperitifs to sweet biscuits and cakes from the patisserie.

Bellavita Expo London, returning to the Business Design Centre in Islington from 18th–20th June 2017, is a haven of Italian produce for both foodies and food retailers. Bellavita Expo is the largest made-in-Italy food and beverage trade show in the UK.

The three-day event provides a dynamic and enjoyable opportunity for all to discover future Italian food, drink and wine trends and product innovations. Bellavita is passionate about promoting both traditional and established brands from Italy, as well as the hidden treasures of Italian cuisine.

Attracting thousands of buyers, chefs and hoteliers, Bellavita Expo offers a showcase for hundreds of artisanal producers from across all regions of Italy, championing the pioneers who are devoted to bringing true excellence and diversity to Italian gastronomy.

New for 2017

What's new at Bellavita this year? The show will be tantalising the tastebuds of guests with a completely unique food installation: FOODSCAPE, created by food artist Jacopo Sarzi. Guests will be taken on a culinary journey through Italy with a display taking inspiration from Harry's Table pop-up restaurant, showcasing a range of stunning Italian charcuterie.

Never before seen at an expo, the installation will depict the modern-day Italian landscape, made from both natural and edible materials, enhancing the natural qualities of the produce by recreating the landscape from which they have been sourced.

The installation will be both interactive and self-standing, and an exciting way to become immersed in artisanal produce. FOODSCAPE depicts Italy through an interactive installation that celebrates its gastronomic culture, hinting at the tradition of the Grand Tour. A grand journey through southern Italy, where the remains of ancient civilisation co-exist with local thriving communities. The celebration of the simple things done well, abounding in vitality, colour and taste. Faithful to the tradition, unafraid of the test of time.

As a food designer with more than seven years' experience in the food and beverage industry, Jacopo Sarzi shares Bellavita's passion for making positive changes in society through edible products. In 2012, he established his practice in London after falling in love with the diversity and the curiosity that pervade the inhabitants of this fantastic city. In 2017 he won the Evening Standard's Young Progress Maker Award for his 'Food Design Lab', which was awarded the best innovative business idea by a jury of entrepreneurs and business gurus.

New and exciting products

This year, Bellavita has sourced more exciting and innovative products than ever before, with a particular focus on products highlighting the free-from trend.

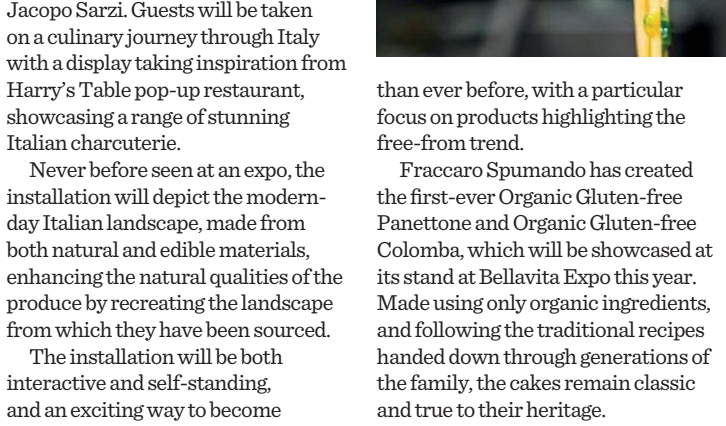

DAVIDE DEGIOVANNI

Fraccaro Spumando has created the first-ever Organic Gluten-free Panettone and Organic Gluten-free Colomba, which will be showcased at its stand at Bellavita Expo this year. Made using only organic ingredients, and following the traditional recipes handed down through generations of the family, the cakes remain classic and true to their heritage.

The bakery began making these products out of a demand for bread and cakes that reflect the necessities of modern Italy. Fraccaro Dolcaria was set up in 1932, when Elena and Giovanni Fraccaro established a bakery in Castelfranco Veneto in the province of Treviso, thus starting a confectionery tradition with a promising future. Besides producing delicious loaves of bread, the bakery also gained a reputation for its confectionery and pastries.

The Panificio Pasticceria Toschi SNC has followed suit in creating products for modern Italy by creating a beautiful range of vegan products at their pastry shop in Tuscany's Lucca province. The Toschi family have created vegan cakes as their latest venture, however the bakery has a story that spans hundreds of years. Paolo Toschi and his wife Stefania opened the pastry shop in 1985, creating the finest cakes and biscuits for local buyers.

Their sweet treats began to attract a wider audience, and over time Stefania began to increase the range the bakery was producing, following her desire to create new and innovative products for modern Italy. Here began the vegan line of sweet treats, produced without eggs,


A DEMONSTRATION BY FRANCESCO MAZZEI

AUTHENTIC AT ORIGIN

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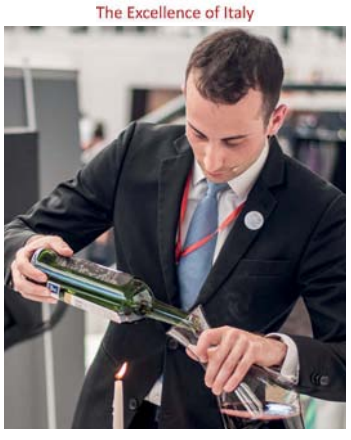
milk and derivatives. The range will be coming to the UK for the first time ever at the Expo this June, ideal for any of those choosing to follow a vegan lifestyle.

Chefs

Bellavita Expo's highly successful Chef Academy has attracted more top names in the hospitality industry than ever before, with world-famous chefs partnering with this year's edition of the show.

Leading the line-up of chefs will be Francesco Mazzei, Georgio Locatelli and Theo Randall, all renowned in their industry for creating Michelin-starred Italian food. Some of the chefs will be demonstrating at Bellavita Expo's Chef Academy, and participating in an industry-led set of exciting roundtable discussions which will introduce guests to new trends in Italian cuisine.

Also demonstrating at the Expo's Chef Academy this year will be



Michelin-starred chef Niko Romito, one half of three Michelin-starred Reale in Abruzzo, Italy, alongside world-famous chef Georgio Locatelli of London's Locanda Locatelli, which has retained a Michelin-star since it was awarded in 2002. Terry Giacomello of one Michelin-starred Ristorante Inkiostro will also be hosting a masterclass at the Expo on Sunday 18th June. Claudio Sadler (of two Michelin-starred restaurant Sadler in Milan), Felice Lo Basso (of one Michelin-starred Felix Lo Basso in Milan) and Davide Degiovanni (of Gordon Ramsay's Union Street Café in London) will be also demonstrating at the Expo.

Massimo Bottura, a loyal supporter of the show, will be commenting on upcoming trends in Italian food ahead of the Expo in June. Bottura is chef patron of three Michelin-starred restaurant Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy, consistently voted in the top five at The World's 50 Best Restaurant Awards and internationally renowned for breaking the boundaries of traditional Italian cuisine. Massimo's approach to haute cuisine will provide a unique insight for the HORECA industry.

2017 will be an incredibly exciting year at the Bellavita Expo in London, with so many chefs at the top of their industry demonstrating at the show.

Italian food trends

Food trends are a bigger focus than ever at this year's Expo, where Bellavita will bring something very special for visitors to take away from the show. Bellavita has created the first-ever extensive 2018/19 Italian Food Trends report, shared only with those attending the event.

For those looking to spot the next big thing in Italian cuisine, this is an unmissable opportunity to gain a fascinating insight into the future of Italian food. The in-depth 194-page report, focusing on British and American trends, will be prepared by leading trends agency The Food People, which has an extensive list of retail, food production and hospitality clients including the Casual Dining Group, Waitrose, Tesco and Marks & Spencer.

The Food People will embark on a deep dive using their global trend-spotting network to identify trends relevant to Italian food and drink. Utilising their unique menu-watching tool to provide food service analysis in the UK, as well as input from their team across the globe, the report will identify trends in Italian food, wine and coffee, social and cultural trends, health, sharing and regionality and the trend lifecycles of key Italian ingredients.

The report is vital for anyone wanting to know exactly what is trending in Italian food and drink, from old favourites to rising stars, and broader themes such as regionality, provenance and nostalgia, in both food service and retail, and across the globe – if you work in Italian food/beverage, then you need this report!

As global ambassadors for Italian food and wine, Bellavita also hosts trade shows in Chicago, Amsterdam, Mexico City and Warsaw. The Bellavita e-shop delivers authentic Italian food to your door in London, Bellavita's magazine covers all the latest trade news and food trends, and the Bellavita Academy hosts workshops on Italian food and wine tasting.

For further information and free trade registration visit bellavita.com

IN DETAIL

WHEN: 18th–20th June 2017
WHERE: Business Design Centre, Islington, London
WEB: bellavita.com
TWITTER: @BellavitaExpo
PHONE: +44 (0) 203 002 0506



BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS

An ambitious crop of young talent is changing the face of our industry. Here they share their inspiration and advice

Whether it's setting up a street food stall, a healthy snacks brand or an online marketplace selling luxury fare, young people brimming with innovative concepts and indefatigable enthusiasm are setting up shop throughout the UK – and it's exciting to witness.

There are currently 26,000 UK businesses run by young entrepreneurs aged 21 and under, according to Cotswold Fayre, which organises the Young Food & Drink Entrepreneur of the Year Awards. "Young people are increasingly interested in the provenance, quality and nutritional content of products. It's great to see this active interest being translated into new product innovation," says Paul Hargreaves, chief executive.

But it's not just these incentives that have keen businesspeople chomping at the bit to start a new food venture. Young producers are finding that today's marketplace is chock full of open-minded consumers excited to try the next great product, inspired by social media, and keen to support the growing number of businesses passionate about quality, story and innovation.

Trade nourishment

The health food market is growing exponentially and, armed with astute marketing skills, young entrepreneurs have identified that eager consumers have an appetite for 'healthy' food, from gluten-free snacks to cold-pressed green juices.

Take crispy coconut snacking brand, Ape Snacks as an example. The founder of the company, 21-year-old Zach Nathan, shares a passion for both business and food, in particular, "real food". Growing up following a paleolithic diet he had always paid close attention to ingredient lists, but it wasn't until noticing a drought of healthy food snacks that he decided to establish a food company.

"After researching more about nutrition, I decided to drop out of university," says Zach. "You need to surround yourself with talent – I was lucky enough to meet a business partner who has spent 30 years in the industry." With his snacks now on supermarket shelves nationwide, Zach puts credits the success to a winning formula of inherent naivety and energy, paired with his partner's ample experience.

Another example is the fresh-pressed juice company Supernatural, whose founder 25-year-old ex-cocktail bar mixologist, Dan Thompson, aimed to channel his expertise into a healthy drinks brand. He set up a stall at Maltby Street Market, and due to overwhelming demand, Supernatural is now one of London's leading juice bar companies, selling thousands of juices every day from a Canary Wharf flagship store, various pop-up locations and an online shop. Dan believes it's never been easier to get into the food sector as, "street food markets and food festivals are so in-demand and come with low overheads for start-up businesses."

Innovation nation

Social media is essential for market reach, with many young entrepreneurs hailing it as a leading element of their success. Canny brand owners typically identify their target social media influencers and send them samples to review, in exchange for coverage on their Instagram accounts or blogs. As Michelle Ruiz, a writer at the US-based Bon Appetit magazine stated: "Influencers are a direct line to the coveted millennial audience."

It's not just social networking that aspiring businesspeople are turning their attentions to; crowdfunding is also imperative to many start-up companies. You only need to look at the enterprising nous of craft beer giant BrewDog, which used the alternative online fundraising method to catapult itself into the mainstream. It is now one of the fastest-growing drink producers in Britain, with its trading profit hitting £5.5 million in 2015. Douglas Stewart, the young owner of The Hebridean Food Company, also knows firsthand the benefits of crowdfunding – the venture saw 70% of a set £60,000 investment target reached in under a week.

Social media is an invaluable tool in today's start-up's arsenal, but that's only part of the equation – particularly when it comes to the speciality market. Pippa Murray, founder of Pip & Nut explains, "Now more than ever people are really interested in food and the provenance of it. This is great news for brands, like Pip & Nut, who are producing products that have what's called a 'clean label' i.e. no nasties inside. As a result consumers generally are trusting brands they're buying into and are more and more willing to pick up something that's a bit more expensive so long as it's delivering a better product than others on shelf." Understanding the true value of good food is key, she continues: "This partially comes down to the fact that people are much more educated about food then they have ever been before, and are are also becoming a lot more experimental with their food choices. For instance, almond butter is still quite a new thing for UK consumers but it's our best-selling product and we think there is still so much potential to grow it." Just as important to these new entrepreneurs as today's willing customer base is professional satisfaction, says Pippa. "On a personal front, as a founder working in the food world, one of things that I love most about this industry is how broad and creative it is. As a food brand you can tap into everything from sport to fashion and beauty – it's much more of a lifestyle thing – so it opens up the doors for all sorts of amazing collaborations and new ways of getting your brand out there."

Hugh Thomas and Joe Benn, founders of Ugly Drinks echo this sentiment: "It's a super exciting time to be in this sector. Consumers are looking for exciting, tasty, healthy and relevant products (that entrepreneurs can bring to market) and retailers are aware of this desire. The development of the internet has dropped barriers to getting word out there about your brand and if you're able to create a great brand, team and ultimately product, there are hundreds if not thousands of opportunities out there right now."



TIPS FROM THE TRADE



Pippa Murray, Pip & Nut

"You don't need to necessarily have experience in the industry – I certainly didn't – but what's key is surrounding yourself with people that help guide you in the right direction and being quick to learn"

Edward Smith, Doisy & Dam

"When it comes to newfangled wizardry: Slack is really useful for communication; Shopify is a great e-commerce website too; Xero accountancy software is great"



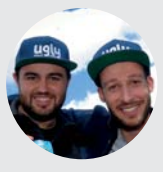


Zach Nathan, Ape

"Persevere and stay focused. Surround yourself with talent"

Hugh Thomas and Joe Benn, Ugly Drinks

"Be as patient as persistent. There will be obstacles along the way, but you need to be patient, see these moments as learning opportunities and continue to move forward, however hard it looks ahead"



> "Armed with astute marketing skills, young entrepreneurs have identified that eager consumers have an insatiable appetite for healthy food"





"ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS ASK"

Jason Gibb, co-founder of Bread & Butter festival

Each day 45 new food and drink businesses emerge onto the market. The tragedy is that, out of the dozens of organic insect-bars, bone broth-infused crisps and hand-harvested turmeric drinks launched this year, the vast majority – 90% – will fail. Along the way, they will each waste an average of over £60k of cash. Whilst a handful will become the next FMCG sensation, most will burn their way through their life savings with nothing to show for their efforts.

What is it that separates the winners from the losers? From my experience, the foodpreneurs who cut the mustard have a magical combination of stubborn determination, undoubted talent, a sprinkling of luck and, most importantly, an understanding that when they've reached the limits of their own abilities and know-how, they need to seek advice and help from those who know more.

In the past, finding help and support was not so simple, and when I started my entrepreneurial journey 15 years ago it really was a lonely road. I had few contacts within the industry, and beyond the trade show I exhibited at, I didn't have a clue where to find like-minded folk. By a stroke of luck I was rescued by a fellow entrepreneur who invited me to a regular dinner for food and drink founders – here I met kindred spirits, with whom I could crack jokes about product liability insurance, laugh over NPD mistakes and find out what the Selfridges Food Hall buyer's name was. It was a community and it was a game-changer for me. We were supporting each other, bound by the knowledge that the roots of sustainable success lie in also helping those around you succeed.

The new wave of food entrepreneurs are well aware of this – 'Generation Share' they're called. Go on a Facebook group such as the 'FoodHub' and you will find a community of 1,700 food and drink entrepreneurs swapping information on everything from how to pitch to Ocado to who the best barcode suppliers are. It's a clear demonstration of the philosophy that the best way to get to the top is to focus not on your solo journey but on bringing others along with you.

Our event, Bread & Butter, is born out of this community spirit of sharing. It's a two day festival of talks, workshops, panels, and pitching. The vast majority of the content is delivered by successful food entrepreneurs, driven by the desire to share their stories of success and failure, in the hope that it will help and inspire the next generation of food founders. At last year's inaugural event we heard the founders of Green & Blacks, Teapigs, Hello Fresh, Graze and Propercorn (to name a few) sharing their, warts-and-all, rollercoaster journeys to success. After the event I was overwhelmed by the positive feedback and tales of business-changing connections and long-term collaborations that came out of it. We had companies winning their first listing in Wholefoods, nervous entrepreneurs being inspired to chuck in their day jobs and go full time on their food business, and numerous cross-promotional deals being done.

This year's collaboration with *Speciality Food* and their New Producer Awards is also a wonderful example of how 'giving' can be a successful, modern business model. The awards are free for emerging brands to enter, with the winners gaining immeasurable PR value from being featured in *Speciality Food*. And who knows, maybe one day they will grow big enough to be a paid advertiser in the magazine. It's a win-win situation.

Sign up for the New Producer Awards, come along to Bread & Butter and find out how the community can help you. All you need to do is ask.

> "The best way to get to the top is to focus not on your solo journey but on bringing others along with you"



SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

NEW PRODUCER AWARDS 2017

CALLING ALL PRODUCERS!

Do you run a food and drink business? Is it less than three years old?

Partridges LONDON

"These awards are is a great way to support the success and achievements of the food and drink start up community – who are all heroes by definition"

John Shepherd, MD of Partridges

BREAD & BUTTER

"These awards are truly ground-breaking – they are completely free to enter and the marketing that winners will get off the back of it will supercharge their business!"

Jason Gibb, co-founder of Bread & Butter

COTSWOLD FAYRE* -EST 1999-

"There is a lot of work to do within the speciality food world on developing more sustainable businesses, and we want to support any producers developing within this area"

Paul Hargreaves, chief executive of Cotswold Fayre

To find out more visit

www.specialityfoodmagazine.com/awards



BALKAN FOOD

Recipes from former Ottoman lands have been sneaking their way onto Jamie Oliver's website, Ottolenghi's online deli and the menus of trendy London pop-ups says Sally-Jayne Wright

Err, I ought to know this. Where are the Balkans? They are the countries which were once under Ottoman rule and comprised Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. A wider definition includes Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Albania, European Turkey and Greece. Balkan means wooded mountainous region. Not to be confused with the Baltics.

WHY BALKAN FOOD NOW?

We can't get enough of Eastern Mediterranean food – grills cooked on wood or coals, pomegranates, flatbreads and mezze – and influencers like Ottolenghi and Oliver are widening our horizons. The pan-Balkan restaurant Peckam Bazaar, tun by an Albanian, is one of the favourite restaurants of reviewer Fay Maschler. In his BBC2 series *From Venice to Istanbul* Rick Stein made Dalmatian fig tart and Albanian baked lamb compulsive viewing.

When chef Martin Shaw set up a pop-up kitchen at hip Waterloo entertainment venue The Vaults, he chose a Balkan theme. Inspired by his travels, he cooked up Hungary hot potato, Smoky Serb salsa and chicken or courgette souvlaki with labneh "to give guests a great alternative to your average posh kebab joint".

WHO ARE THE MAIN PLAYERS?

There are two: Granny's Secret and Pelagonia. Serbian expat Snezana Knowles came to the UK in 1989 and missed home cooking so much she started Granny's Secret in 2012. She sells honey and juices plus savoury and fruit spreads cooked slowly, the traditional Serbian way. Around the same time, Philip Evans, CEO of Pelagonia, decided the adventurous palates of the Brits were ready for the Macedonian experience; everything from cherry peppers stuffed with hummus, to wild green fig jam, to Malidzano, the aubergine purée sold by Ottolenghi.

IS THERE A STAND-OUT PRODUCT?

We can't get enough of aivar (pronounced aye-vah) a creamy, smoky, roasted red pepper spread with the texture of baba ganoush.

Evans said: "Aivar is the hummus of the Balkans. I've tried very hard to trace the origins without success. Everyone's auntie makes the best."

When he arranged an aivar tasting at Guildford coffee shop cum deli, Caracoli, in 2012, they sold 100 jars in a day. It's now at Waitrose and Ocado.

IS THAT IT – RED PEPPER SPREAD?

No, you can also expect wholesome preserved veg, conserves, fruit spreads, extra jams and juices likely to appeal to the health conscious, foodie, vegan, vegetarian, gift and hamper markets. Granny's Secret's 100% fruit spreads outsell even their delectable Great Taste Award-winning aivar. They are sweetened with grape juice, and flavours include Rosehip, Wild Blueberry, Apricot, Sour Cherry and White Cherry. Holland & Barrett sell them online. With honey sales up nearly 9%, Granny's Secret's new Linden and Acacia honeys are also likely to do well.

HOW CAN I MAKE THE BALKAN TREND WORK FOR US?

Summers's coming. How about a Balkan barbecue with flatbreads, grated beetroot, red onion and sumac, aivar and smoky aubergine purée on your next farm open day? Get your butcher to knock up some cevapi (skinless sausages) and chargrill long, light green Turkish peppers. They appear on nearly every roast or grilled meat platter from this region. Or how about Balkan cheese toasties – cheese plus aivar – in your café and a selection of mezze on the restaurant menu?

WILL THE TREND LAST?

We think so, if the success of hummus is anything to go by. It was only introduced in the 1980s, yet today the UK is the humus capital of Europe. Aivar go.







BOOST YOUR BISCUIT SALES

From delicate florentines to sugar-free shortbread, the biscuit sector is awash with exciting varieties to stock. We catch up with the businesses currently invigorating the category

A farm shop or deli's biscuit section can always be relied upon as a guaranteed customer magnet. Not only does it benefit from the fact that it is relatively low maintenance to operate, with most products coming in ambient format and boasting long shelf lives, but it is also an area that is perfect for trialling different lines.

While you have your guaranteed fan favourites like chocolate chip cookies and traditional shortbread there for a reliable revenue stream, it is recommended to explore the sector, as it continues to offer intriguing biscuits coming in myriad flavours with provenance, left field ingredients, health and eco factors increasingly playing a pivotal role in the production of biscuits.

The sheer amount of quality and variations within the biscuit-making industry is something that Keren Shaw, general manager of Weetons Food Hall in Harrogate has noticed. "We do tend to get more customers asking for free-from options," says Keren. "Including queries about gluten-free, sugar-free and specific allergy-free."

Biscuits, no matter what guise they come in, remain a consistent strong seller at Weetons and are often used to cross-sell, too. "Our biscuit offering is a very popular section and an important arm of the business," she explains, "especially as we have a vast selection of cheeses on our deli counter that the savoury biscuits complement very well. We often sell the two together, especially when we match them for our customers to taste. And who doesn't like to treat themselves to sweet biscuits? They are more of an impulse buy but the section is always heavily browsed and purchased from."

Weetons stocks an extensive array of sweet and savoury lines, says Keren. "We have our own-brand, which includes flavours like chocolate chip and stem ginger. Shortbread biscuits are always popular, as is our Yorkshire supplier Bothams of Whitby's range. To add variety to the offering we have macaroons, different kinds of cookies, cantuccini, coffee complements and biscuits for children, which include animal-shaped and creatively iced options. In terms of savoury options, we stock a variety of flavoured crackers like chilli, fig, fennel and chive. Oatcakes are also very popular, as is our crispbread range, which includes Toast for Cheese products and other cheese biscuits."

Stocking is undertaken using a host of different techniques. "We tend to get approached by independent suppliers, which is great," says Keren. "We use a few larger wholesalers who have a vast range often incorporating independent producers, so they're important to us, too. We also tend to proactively seek ranges by attending food shows and researching online."

Environmentally-friendly flavours

A biscuit producer which has developed a dedicated foodie following is Island Bakery, located on the picturesque Isle of Mull off of the east coast of Scotland. The company not only creates a varied range of biscuits – including the hugely popular Lemon Melts – but it also ensures that a sustainable and eco-focused business model remains one of its top priorities. "While all businesses have some impact on the environment, we do try to minimise ours wherever possible, on both a



local and global level," says Dawn Reade, who founded the business with husband Nick in 2001. "We are lucky – in some ways – that our Hebridrean climate gives us plenty of wind and rain, which we have harnessed to generate electricity. We also use sustainable wood from a local community forest to fuel our ovens. We try to source our ingredients as close to home as we can, but unfortunately most aren't available on the island, however we use Scottish butter and English flour. Other ingredients come from a little further afield, such as Belgian chocolate, lemon oil and stem ginger. Everything is organic, and this in itself gives us extra assurances that the ingredients we use come from producers who practice excellent environmental management that encourages biodiversity and excludes chemical fertilisers or pesticides. We also took the decision not to use palm oil in our recipes due to concerns about the impact that some of its production has on the habitats of endangered species."

As well as adhering to environmentally-conscious business practices, the team also produces creative flavours like Lemon Melts, Oat Crumbles and Chocolate Limes. "Our Lemon Melts are our best-sellers," says Dawn. "Many people were introduced to them on British Airways flights, where our biscuits were being offered to passengers as a complimentary snack. It was great exposure for us and we had regular enquiries from passengers wanting to source them on the ground. But even before they were discovered by British Airways passengers, the Lemon Melts had something of a cult following and we got more fan mail about them than other varieties. It comes down to the simple combination of zesty lemon oil, a melting texture biscuit and creamy Belgian white chocolate."

Island Bakery's unique combination of flavoursome products, traceable ingredients, environmentally-friendly business practices and fascinating story makes it a company that resonates with fans of artisanal produce, explains Dawn. "We think our brand has a personality that fits with the experience of shopping in places where the provenance of the food on offer is important to the customers," she says. "They want to know and trust the story behind the food that they buy. There is a story behind our company which is not just about where we come from, but treading lightly as we go."

Handmade indulgence

Another company that wears its artisanal, handmade and independent principles on its sleeve is Cottage Cookies. Set up at the dawn of the new millennium in a tiny Lancashire bakery, the company has since grown and moved across the Pennines, and now proudly calls Leeds its home. Its catalogue of biscuits, which includes Yorkshire Parkin, Stem Ginger and Viennese Whirls, are all handmade in small batches using traditional recipes and locally-sourced ingredients.

Rachel Harrison Dean, purchasing manager at Cottage Cookies believes that the company's honest credentials puts it in good standing with independent retailers. "Our biscuits are a perfect fit for delis and farm shops because they are totally handmade," she says. "We bake in small batches from locally-sourced ingredients to create a proper artisan product. Our most popular variety is our Yorkshire Parkin, which is not surprising really as we are a Yorkshire company and have a lot of Yorkshire customers! Whether you're from Yorkshire or not, no-one can resist the gingery spiciness of a Yorkshire Parkin biscuit!"

MINTEL ON: BISCUITS

"While the majority of people are concerned about sugar, sales of sweet biscuits are holding up well. With consumers likely to become more focused on portion control due to concerns about sugar though, smaller-sized convenience products and mini packs that also cater better for on-the-go snacking are likely to become more important. The development of more added-value products that consumers are willing to pay more for is also needed to drive value growth as volume sales are expected to stagnate or decline."
Richard Caines, senior food & drink analyst at Mintel



Provenance is key to the brand's success, explains Rachel. "When buying from Cottage Cookies, customers know they are supporting a local business and are assured of a quality product," she says. "Customers frequenting farm shops and delis want something made by real people from responsibly sourced ingredients. They're searching for something that they can't find in their local supermarket, and our biscuits tick all of those boxes."

A traditional approach is what serves family-run Farmhouse Biscuits well, believes Louisa Mayor, sales and new product development manager at the company. "Our best-selling biscuit is the Oat Flip – we often say that it is the biscuit the business was founded on," she explains. "It's a very simple recipe but extremely moreish and we make it every day of the week. Biscuits have evolved over the years with many new and exciting recipes being developed but we believe the traditional biscuits and flavours are always the best."

That is not to say that the business shies away from unconventional paths. "We have been producing gluten-free biscuits for over 20 years," says Louisa. "We were approached to make these biscuits under private label for prescription, however, since then our gluten-free production has grown and the methods and ingredients we use have improved massively. We now have a dedicated bakery producing gluten-free varieties and we feel that we offer a strong range of delicious flavours."

This progressive leaning is echoed in the company's dedication to product development, with it creating intriguing flavours like Treacle & Walnut savoury biscuits and Luxury Red Velvet Crunch Butter Biscuits. "There is a lot of competition in the biscuit industry now, so it is really important to keep up with flavour trends and to try and stay one step ahead," she explains. "We have invested quite a lot in NPD over the last couple of years. It is what our customers expect and we want to be able to push the boundaries by trying new ideas. Obviously there are limits to what you can achieve when baking a biscuit, but it is good to be able to experiment and we're very lucky with the clients that we have which enable us to do just that."

Farmhouse Biscuit's traditional and handmade reputation will always take precedent, believes Louisa. "As traditional batch bakers we are very flexible and can react to our customers' needs very quickly," she explains. " And as a family-run business we offer a friendly and reliable service. Many of our staff members have been here for a number of years, so we offer a wealth of experience. We also take a great deal of care when sourcing our ingredients and never compromise on taste or quality. Traditional baking methods ensure that we produce delicious biscuits with a homemade feel and taste."

Internationally inspired

A company that is currently making waves within the independent food sector is Belgian Boys, with its distinctive Mini Cookie Stach

> "Our biscuit offering is a very popular section and an important arm of the business, especially as we have a vast selection of cheeses on our deli counter that the savoury biscuits complement very well"





products. The company's decision to reinterpret the traditional speculoos cookie has gathered a lot of attention, says Gregory Galel, co-founder of Belgian Boys. "We didn't invent the speculoos cookie, but we've given it a twist," he explains. "Our cookies are shaped as moustaches to add some playfulness to its well-known taste. The recipe is palm oil-free, non-GMO and really addictive. Their moustache shape enables consumers to not only be interactive with the food, but also gives them a chance to participate in a much greater cause. Each 'moustache selfie' taken and posted with #RockThatStash will be entered in a monthly social awareness campaign.

> "Customers frequenting farm shops and delis want something made by real people from responsibly sourced ingredients. They're searching for something that they can't find in their local supermarket, and our biscuits tick all of those boxes"

Each month we pick a winner and donate a part of the proceeds to the winner's charity of choice. They come in handy 28g snack sized packets and the design is clean, fun and minimalistic, which suits the higher end shops. We believe they're a great fit for deli and farm shop customers and will appeal to those seeking an extra special treat."

Gregory believes that British consumers have quickly taken to the speculoss style of biscuit. "Luckily, tea and biscuits is an age-old British tradition!" he says. "Lotus has dominated the speculoos market for quite some time and is a favourite with older generations, but we have the chance to enter the market and do something a little more dynamic and fun while keeping the tradition of the classic speculoos cookie intact. We also see established brand and new start-ups releasing more spiced, cinnamon and gingerbread products every day, so we know we're on the right track!"

Belgian Boys is a company that never likes to rest on its laurels, Gregory assures us. "We are always cooking something in our test kitchens and you will probably see something new next year," he says. "We pride ourselves on being innovative and keeping consumers' tastebuds excited. Biscuits served with tea and coffee is a much-loved tradition for us and we will make sure that we continue to keep this relationship exciting."

It is not just the sweet side of the category that is turning heads either, as there is innovation aplenty within the savoury biscuit sphere. Easy Bean is a producer of healthy biscuits and snacks that continue to push boundaries, and this is particularly apparent with its Chickpea Crispbreads, especially its newest Seaweed & Sesame variety. This umami-rich biscuit uses a colourful blend of native, wild harvested seaweed, which is highly nutritious, rich in minerals, a good source of iodine and a delicious low-sodium salt substitute.

The south Somerset-based brand produces three other Chickpea Crispbread varieties, such as Moroccan Spice, Seeds & Black Pepper and Mung Bean & Chive. "We're on a mission to produce natural and healthy food that champions pulses like beans, peas and lentils," says Christina Baskerville, managing director of Easy Bean. "The innovative crispbreads are handmade using nutty-tasting chickpea flour, so they are naturally gluten-free, wheat-free and high in fibre. The flour is combined with locally-sourced butter and buttermilk to give a crisp and crumbly texture."

STOCK CHECK

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COTTAGE COOKIES YORKSHIRE PARKIN

These cookies are made from spiced ginger, golden syrup and scrumptious oaty bits.

cottagecookies.net



BOTHAM'S OF WHITBY SHAH GINGER BISCUITS

One of the Yorkshire producer's best-sellers – a delicious ginger biscuit made with the warm spice of the Orient.

botham.co.uk



GREAT BRITISH BISCOTTI CO SUNDRIED TOMATO & OLIVES

A delicious accompaniment to any cheeseboard or charcuterie platter, and fantastic with a glass of wine.

greatbritishbiscotti.co.uk



BELGIAN BOYS MINI COOKIE STASH

A modern take on the classic speculoos snack, they come in a novel moustache shape.

belgianboys.com



EASY BEAN SEAWEED & SESAME CHICKPEA CRISPBREAD

A nutritious blend of native seaweed is used to season this new chickpea crispbread.

easybean.co.uk



FARMHOUSE BISCUITS RED VELVET CRUNCH

A rich red velvety shortbread bite dotted with irresistible chunks of white chocolate.

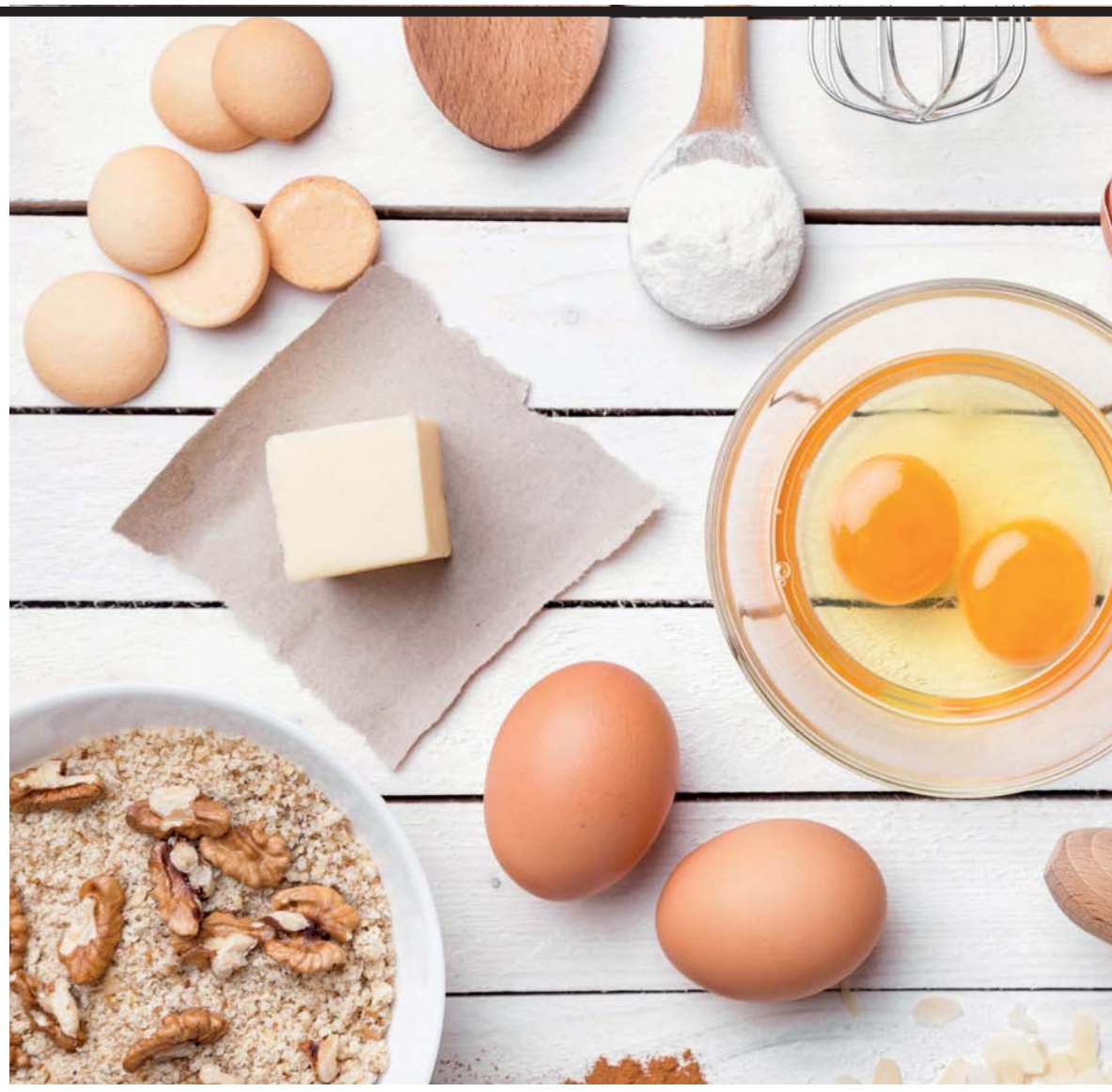
farmhouse-biscuits.co.uk





BAKE AT HOME

When it comes to your home baking offering, think quality, variation and convenience



The trend for home baking shows no sign of waning. In fact, consumers with intolerances are enjoying it more than ever before thanks to producers' efforts to create products which can be enjoyed by all. As ever in the fine food world, quality reigns supreme, and coeliac customers are no longer content with cardboard-like textures and unimpressive flavours – they want to be just as excited by home baking as others. Traditionally just as restricting as allergies, time can also stand in the way of some consumers baking at home. For these customers, opt for convenient options; packet mixes needing just butter, eggs or milk are better than ever before and available in a myriad of flavours, so time-constrained bakers no longer need to feel hard done by either.

As much as possible, think local. Local eggs should be pretty easy to come by, and if you're already stocking them why not go further – is there a local dairy farm looking for stockists for their milk? They may even produce butter, too, but if not, it's easier than you may think to make your own.

Sugar is a must-stock when it comes to your home baking offering, needless to say, but it's worth a bit of thought. By all means stock caster sugar, but consider more exotic variations, too, like palm or coconut sugar and agave syrup. These items may well help bring health-conscious consumers to your store, too.

Stocking a small selection of foods consumers can use to personalise their baking is a good idea, and a lot of these items could already be in your arsenal. For example, do you stock any unsalted nuts, dark chocolate or dried fruit? Position a few alongside your flours and sugars and you could excite your baking customers even more. If you have some space to play with, why not try selling eye-catching items like cupcake cases and small candles? Not only will their colour draw the eyes of your customers, but they could help you to be considered as a one-stop-shop – a valuable reputation to have.

Dates for the diary

Thanks to all its coverage on mainstream media these days, there are plenty of opportunities to promote your baking range. When the latest series of *The Great British Bake Off* is on your customers' screens, you need to be displaying your baking range to its fullest. But less obvious opportunities are there too, such as school holidays – parents and children alike would likely pounce on this everybody-wins activity, particularly on a rainy day – Stir Up Sunday, a date in mid-to-late November when home bakers get started on their Christmas puddings for the festive season, and the pancake-fuelled Shrove Tuesday.

Baking staple

Flour is an exciting world to explore right now, with the popularity of healthy eating bringing previously little-known varieties to the fore. Even if your allocated space for flour is small, try to offer a few varieties: plain for biscuits, self raising for cakes, rye for a flavour-filled option and bread flour for keen bakers (alongside yeast, of course). Hannah Marriage, director at Chelmsford-based millers Marriages's, shares her advice: "When baking, the consistency of flour is key. Baking is a process with many variables, so it's important for consumers to be able to trust their ingredients. Better quality ingredients, such as flour, lead to better baking results and are more likely to lead to repeat purchases."

"Our best sellers are from our core bread flour range – strong white bread flour and Canadian very strong white bread flour then stoneground wholemeal bread flour," she says. "Bread machines remain popular due to their ease of use, however we've seen a big increase in consumers making their own sourdough and long fermentation breads at home.

"Health and 'healthier' baking continues to be an important trend," she continues, "however consumers want to produce bakes that don't compromise on taste. We see more experimenting, with inspiration coming from TV shows such as *The Great British Bake Off* and from social media.

"As a retailer, having an interesting range of quality flours is another way of differentiating your offering, says Hannah. "Consumers are more knowledgeable about product quality nowadays – you





FLOUR: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- **Stoneground wholemeal flour:** flour milled in the old-fashioned, slower way on traditional mill stones, which gives a distinctive nutty flavour and more rounded bran texture
- **Organic flour:** denotes the farming system used to grow the wheat
- **Very Strong Canadian flour:** milled from very strong Canadian Red Wheat, which is renowned worldwide for quality in bread, pasta and pizza making. These flours are very forgiving – ideal when starting out making bread at home, due to the high quantity/quality of gluten in Canadian wheat
- Consumers can also look at the nutritional information on the side of a pack of a flour – such as the protein content for bread making flour (however this should only be used as a guide due to variations in on pack information)

Hannah Marriage, Marriage's



can use point of sale to highlight selling points that resonate with your customers such as traditionally stoneground milled, locally-milled, organic, Red Tractor (British) and the like. Signage can also be used to make recommendations for flours and other baking ingredients for key sales opportunities such as *The Great British Bake Off* – where baking along to episodes is now popular. This can be varied weekly, whether it happens to be Bread Week, Pastry Week etc."

Keeping it real

Award-winning baker, California Prune ambassador and passionate advocate of Real Bread, Peter Cook tells us about the campaign which has increased the consumer appetite for better baking

"The increasing popularity of real bread must in part be attributed to the successful Real Bread Campaign, which is part of the charity Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming. The campaign was co-founded by Andrew Whitley of Bread Matters and Sustain, and simply put, Real Bread is bread that is made without the use of any processing aids or artificial additives.

"When the campaign was started, British baking was not in good shape, and as much as 95% of bread was being made in factories via a process which resulted in the creation of bread that is loaded with preservatives. We are now seeing sales of mass-produced sliced bread sliding as the UK becomes more aware of the true benefits of 'real bread'.

"The current trend for clean eating is very much in line with the Real Bread proposition. To use the term 'real bread', the bread must contain only flour, yeast, salt and water (in the case of sourdough, just flour, yeast and water). It must have gone through a proper round of fermentation (four hours) with no chemicals or preservatives added. The only permitted 'additions' would be 100% natural ingredients.

"The resulting bread is a million miles away from the packaged loaves in the supermarket, and consumers are starting to recognise the dramatic difference in taste and texture. Outside of the clear flavour advantage, other benefits include a longer lasting loaf and one which is more digestible (the long fermentation process softens the gluten in the bread making it more digestible and easier to eat).

"Of course, the plethora of baking programmes such as the Great British Bake Off was also responsible for triggering an enhanced interest in authentically baked goods and a stronger consumer desire to know the provenance of ingredients. This 'informed consumer' approach will similarly have played a part in the boom in 'real bread' purchases.

"Independent retailers looking to capitalise on this opportunity should make every effort to work with local flour producers/millers to source their flour. As the demand for new Real Bread taste sensations continues, speciality retailers should consider stocking breads which feature interesting flavour combinations."

> "The plethora of baking programmes such as *The Great British Bake Off* is responsible for triggering an enhanced interest in authentically baked goods and a stronger consumer desire to know the provenance of ingredients. This 'informed consumer' approach will similarly have played a part in the boom in 'real bread' purchases"



STOCK CHECK

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STEENBERGS ORGANIC ORANGE EXTRACT
A lovely citrus-smelling extract that uses organic sunflower oil flavoured with organic orange oil.
steenbergs.co.uk



GUITTARD ORGANIC 38% MILK CHOCOLATE DISCS
Delicious chocolate boasting a milky-light chocolate taste, fruit and malty tones and unique complexity.
buckleyandbeale.com



LITTLEPOD NATURAL VANILLA PASTE
With a shelf life of two years, this 100ml tube of vanilla paste is equivalent to 20 vanilla pods including seeds.
littlepod.co.uk



MARRIAGE'S GOLDEN WHOLEGRAIN PLAIN FLOUR
A easy and tasty way to boost fibre and add wholegrains.
flour.co.uk



JOE & SEPH'S CHOCOLATE CARAMEL SAUCE
Smooth caramel made with fresh double cream, blended with pure Belgian cocoa to create a beautifully balanced sauce.
joeandsephs.co.uk



SUGAVIDA PALMYRA JAGGERY
A superfood sweetener with low GI, making it suitable for diabetics.
sugavida.com



JUST INGREDIENTS COCONUT OIL
Cold-pressed and unrefined coconut oil, ideal for all sorts of baking.
trade.justingredients.co.uk



SWEET VIRTUES CHOCOLATE SUPERFOOD NUT BUTTER
A delicious and nutritious chocolate spread infused with chia seeds, raw cacao, and coconut oil.
sweetvirtues.co.uk



HONEYBUNS GLUTEN-FREE CAKE MIX
A versatile gluten-free cake mix made with natural ingredients – just add eggs and butter.
honeybuns.co.uk



NETHEREND FARM SALTED BUTTER
Made in small batches from fresh local dairy cream.
netherendfarmbutter.co.uk

PEP UP YOUR PACKAGING

From durable packaging solutions to selling own-brand labelled products, we talk to the experts about how effective packaging and labelling yields positive results

Packaging and labelling is a topic that runs through all areas of your business; whether you operate a foodservice section selling homemade fare or are simply wrapping up an artisan cheese to pass to your customer, every element in the process needs to be meticulously considered. After all, your customers are shopping at your establishment due to its quality offering, so it is only right that all aspects of service are best in class, too.

The modern consumer is more invested in food and drink provenance, story and traceability than ever before, so labelling needs to be comprehensible and effective. The cheese counter is always a popular area of any fine food outlet, however it can suffer from a lack of information about the products on display. If service staff are busy, then clear and informative signage can appease customers' curiosities with ease.

Andy Swinscoe, owner of The Courtyard Dairy, is an advocate of a well-assembled and labelled cheese area. He says, "A good and attractive display makes it easier for the customer. I'd especially recommend pointing out local cheeses, and arranging the display so customers can find what they want easily by clearly labelling grouped together styles. Customers are being sold a premium product and the service should include how it is displayed, wrapped and bagged – it all counts!" Another cheese-selling expert, Ann-Marie Dyas, co-owner of The Fine Cheese Co., concurs with Andy. "As a cheesemonger, labelling, packaging and display is a critical part of our job," she explains. "Cheese is a precious commodity – show it respect and always offer it in the best condition."

Gerry Moss, retail development manager at WBC, believes that packaging and labelling techniques can also be utilised in sampling areas in order to influence sales. "A good free taster section will also have products packed up and ready to be sold for all those impulse buy customers," he says. "Wax paper and twine, card trays and lids and even gifting wicker hampers should all be in arm's reach of your tasting area. Once your customers have had a taste of your products, the next thing to do is create a sale!"



Robust packaging needs to be a top priority, too. If the item is fragile, make sure that it is well wrapped and will withstand transportation. If a product requires chilling, it is of the utmost importance that you house it in top-quality temperature controlled packaging so you're safe in the knowledge that your customer's items make it home in a safe and well-maintained condition. There are plenty of companies out there specialising in packaging options for the fine food industry, with Icertech and Deliwraps proving to be popular and dependable choices.

Companies like Deliwraps offer a

> "Customers are being sold a premium product and the service should include how it is displayed, wrapped and bagged –it all counts!"









vast catalogue of various packaging papers to wrap the different styles of food your deli sells. Paper is a natural, versatile and environmentally-responsible packaging medium, and can also lend your products a traditional and wholesome appearance. Combining different waxes with different base papers creates packaging which can be engineered to protect against the fats, oils and moisture in foods. Cheese is best wrapped in a specialised cheese wrap, which often comes in a biodegradable and versatile white waxed paper with grease and moisture barrier properties – it is a popular wrapping for all types of cheeses and other high-moisture food items. Generic white waxed paper is a good general food wrapper suitable for protecting charcuterie, sandwiches and baguettes, however it doesn't boast any moisture barrier properties, so would not be suitable for wrapping fresh meat and fish.

> "Our labelling is designed and printed in-house. It all adds to the overall shopping experience and supports the bigger brand message"



EYE-CATCHING PACKAGING FROM MELROSE & MORGAN

These items are best packaged in either white high performance waxed paper or white polyethylene-coated paper. As well as offering a plethora of paper options, Deliwraps provides a bespoke branded packaging service, which is ideal for marketing purposes.

Benefits of own-brand

High-end London grocery and deli Melrose & Morgan is one company that has reaped the benefits of rolling out its own line of branded products. Tracey Bellow, director of Melrose & Morgan, notes that since opening in 2005 its distinctive and sophisticated packaging has played a strong part in the business' success. "The most important element of everything we sell is the flavour of the product and making it in a pure and classic way with no preservatives or additives," she explains. "But there is no doubt that packaging is an integral part of how that is then delivered to our customer, and we do spend a long time working on the presentation and packaging once the recipe is agreed. We have our team of packers who hand-package and label each and every item to an agreed specification, and of course, the less packaging the better. Our labelling is designed and printed in-house, too. It all adds to the overall shopping experience and supports the bigger brand message."

Although the Melrose & Morgan shops sell a range of carefully sourced food and drinks from other producers, Tracey acknowledges that the own-brand products consistently remain a best-selling category. "Our sales are made up from 50% of own-brand product and the rest from a range of bought-in items that we source directly from independent suppliers from in and around London," she says. "There is no doubt that our own-brand items are the fastest sellers. It is so great to be able to offer our customers a warm muffin that was literally baked in the morning and is still warm when we open the shop's doors. Having the kitchen ensures that we can maintain quality and also innovate throughout the year, so that our customers get variety and choice."

Selling a range of own-branded products made in-house boasts a host of advantages, explains Tracey. "At its core, having our own-brand products makes our offering unique," she explains. "So, you have to come through the doors of the shop to buy these items, or at least go to our online shop. But for us it was also about offering food that we are proud of and food which we want to eat. Hand-producing good quality food is challenging and you can't always find people who will make products to the standard that we demand, so this way we know hand on heart that we are selling items that fulfil the values that we want to operate with: selling well-made, great tasting and relevant food."

The importance of aesthetics

You may have created a great product, but without well-conceived labelling your item could fall at the first hurdle. David Wooster, owner of packaging design specialists LabelArt, knows how effective bespoke and eye-catching label designs can be to food producers and retailers. "LabelArt specialises in the creative aspect of product labelling, from concept through to artwork design services, and the ongoing evolution of the label through the product's life cycle," explains David. "We also work as a consultancy on all aspects of label production advising on various print processes, substrates, embellishments and innovative developments within the industry, including digitally printed labels and variable data unique labelling, which can interact with the consumer."

David believes that there are lots of impactful visual features that can influence a consumer to pick up a product. "As consumers, we are all unique and drawn to different aesthetic values," he says. "There are many factors involved in the creative process to produce a label, however, looking at current trends, special substrates and unusual label shapes, along with embellishments that harmonise with the creative content on the label, give the product a high-value appearance, add shelf appeal and are important when catching the consumer's eye. Good examples of this can be found in the wine and boutique brewing sector."

LABELLING YOUR PRODUCTS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The following information must be on the front of packaged food:

- The name of the food
- A best before or use by date (or state where to find it)
- Any necessary warnings
- Quantity information

The following must also be visible, but can be on the front, side or back of the packaging:

- A list of ingredients (if there are more than two)
- Allergy or health warnings for certain ingredients
- The name and address of the manufacturer, packer or seller
- The lot number (or use-by date)
- Any special storage conditions
- Cooking instructions, if they are necessary
- A warning for drinks with an alcohol content above 1.2%
- A warning if the product contains GM ingredients, unless if their presence is 0.9% or less
- A warning if the product has been radiated
- The warning 'packaged in a protective atmosphere' if the product is packaged using a packaging gas





THE SPECIALITY FOOD GUIDE TO FOOD SAFETY

Dr Mike Lewis, academic and consultant to the food industry, explores some challenges faced by artisan food producers and suppliers

I am always surprised by the range of products my local farm shop offers and the number of specialist suppliers who make these outlets viable. To offer such a rich diversity of legally compliant products without the massive support systems used by the major supermarkets is a credit to the sector's hard work and endeavour.

The complexity of food should never be underestimated. A graduate from a food science department in a top university would acquire a detailed knowledge of only a small fraction of the variety of artisan products available. I am therefore drawing your attention to some key issues that manufacturers and retailers of artisan foods should keep in mind.

Making food safe but healthy and tasty too

Food safety at its most fundamental level requires products to be free from any risk of food poisoning. You would also expect food to provide adequate nutrition, be affordable and meet consumer expectations in terms of its taste, flavour and texture. They should also be free of pesticides, antibiotics, growth hormones, heavy metals and radioactive substances – to name just a few of the possible contaminants.

Disarming consumer fads and fears

Concerns about contaminants may be why some consumers show a preference for higher-priced, locally-sourced foods, a small proportion of which may be organic. Food fear, of course, accounts for the expanding range of free-from products that demand ever increasing shelf space in shops and supermarkets. Artisan foods are no exception. The sector needs to offer varieties that cater to real and perceived intolerances and allergies such as nut, gluten and lactose.

Many consumers will scoff at the term 'processed food' but most of the agricultural raw materials (e.g. milk, meat, fruit, vegetables and cereals) are naturally perishable and need some form of processing for them to be fit for consumption by the time they reach the table. They also worry about chemicals added to foods and forget that foods are chemical in nature. Many of these fears are totally unfounded. Consider for example the demonised E numbers. Many of the compounds listed in E for additives are naturally occurring in foods.

There some important principles for ensuring food safety. The first relates to the acidity of the product. Almost all food poisoning bacteria will not grow in an acidic environment (pH is below 4.5). Since most fruit is acidic the main concern is not food poisoning but spoilage. This is caused by mould and yeast. Mould spoilage is obvious by appearance. Yeast spoilage is less so and occurs mainly in drinks, with the end product being alcohol.



For canned and other heat-preserved foods, a distinction is made between acid and low-acid food. The most heat resistant food poisoning bacteria is clostridium botulinum. This microbe will not grow below a pH of 4.5. Yet much to my surprise even a leading dairy company was embroiled in disputes about its existence in their processing plant and some of their products. Even though this was later shown not to be the case, it lost them a lot of revenue through the resulting publicity.

Thus all low-acid heat preserved foods are given a heat treatment which is known as the minimum botulinum cook, which is equivalent to reaching a temperature of 121°C for three minutes.

It is understanding and conforming to these procedures that make canned foods very safe to consume.

From heat treatment to refrigeration

Even though fresh produce such as fruit and vegetables require no refrigeration, they are nevertheless subject to subtle biochemical changes which limit their shelf life. Some of these changes are not so obvious, such as vitamin C loss in fresh vegetables, but some are, when they affect texture, flavour or appearance such as wilting or appearance of mould.

Many products require to be refrigerated, and you may think refrigeration is the simple answer. However, refrigerators accelerate spoilage when the temperature is poorly controlled. In this category the most important determinants of quality are reducing post-processing contamination and secondly keeping the product as cold as possible.

Some of my results have shown that pasteurised milk will keep for 10-14 days at 8°C, for 25 to 40 days at 4°C and for longer than 60 days at 2°C. Thus knowing at what temperature your fridge works is important for both the retailer and the consumer. The weak link in the cold chain is when it leaves the retailer's premises.

You might think storing frozen products at -18°C until consumption is the simple and efficient solution. This would certainly curtail microbial activity but other

> "Food fear, of course, accounts for the expanding range of free-from products that demand ever-increasing shelf space in shops and supermarkets"





> Knowing at what temperature your fridge works is important for both the retailer and the consumer. The weak link in the cold chain is when it leaves the retailer's premises

> Nature refuses to produce any food of a fixed composition

chemical reactions can occur that affect fats and unexpectedly reduce the storage life of fatty products, due mainly to off-flavours.

Fluctuating frozen storage temperatures can damage products in other ways. This is because when small ice-crystals melt and are then refrozen they form larger ice crystals and can ruin products such as ice cream. Frozen products are inherently safe, but their quality may deteriorate during storage.

Food composition varies – get used to it

Nature refuses to produce any food of a fixed composition. If you want to be informed, read food composition tables. They are eminently practical since they give a snapshot of chemical composition and values for nutrient levels in a whole range of foods. These tables are particularly useful for people looking for foods that are rich in specific nutrients. They demonstrate how all nutrients required in their diets can be obtained from foods without resort to supplements. Most countries compile their own composition tables.

Composition tables, however, need to be used with caution. They only provide average values for the many nutrients in foods and take no account of biological variability of all organic matter. For example, you may be faced with choosing from upwards of 10 different types of tomato. Each one will be slightly different in composition and also different to figures provided in these tables. I have found, for example, variations of at least 4% in sugar levels in two different grapes taken from the same bunch.

A recent study of the composition of milk from the same farm showed that protein ranged from 2.89-3.56%, with fat varying from 3.62-4.77% and lactose from 4.52-4.69%. This is normal. This is nature. Our own blood, faeces and urine vary in composition by the hour depending upon our circumstances. Medics diagnose a whole range of human ailments by looking at subtle changes in the composition of bodily fluids. Why then would we not expect products such as milk, meat, cereals and vegetables to show similar variations in composition from day to day?

Nor do food compositions tables tell us anything about the enzymes in food and the microbial flora. For example raw milk contains over 60 indigenous enzymes and over 1000 species of bacteria may be identified. It is almost impossible to eliminate pathogens from raw milk, but milk pasteurisation is very effective at inactivating them. The UK produces some of the best quality raw milk in the world, but its average microbial count is just over 20,000 bacteria per ml.

Despite this, we are still a nation of milk drinkers. We Brits drink about 50% of the total raw milk produced – most of which is pasteurised. Pasteurised milk may contain less than 1000 bacteria per ml immediately after processing, but by the time it has gone sour its bacterial count may be in the region of 10 million per ml. We have become accustomed to consuming large numbers of bacteria in our daily lives, especially if we eat lots of live yoghurt.

Beware of the scaremongers

The composition of vegetables and cereal crops will be determined by the nutrients and minerals present in the soil. There may be an abundance of desirable nutrients, but in some soils there will be traces of heavy metals and radioactive substances naturally occurring in the ground.

Modern sophisticated analytical instruments can detect unwanted substances present at much lower levels than those accepted by food safety standards. But of course the mere presence of these substances can be exploited to give the food industry a bad name.

The detection of radioactive substances or dioxin are meaningless without further qualification, especially if no mention is made of how they compare with what is considered to be safe. It is very easy to start a scare, especially on the unregulated internet. In an ideal world, all suppliers and consumers of food should be in a position to critically assess information from all sources.

Should you label customers?

The natural variability of food composition is rarely discussed in publications dealing with the components of foods, and this variability of course provides a challenge for nutritional labelling.

You can't put an accurate label on every item of food for sale. We might have some reasonable expectation that the composition of any food should be exactly what it says on the label but tolerances are permitted to account for natural variations in composition. These tolerances are not the same for all nutrients and a summary of what is permitted makes interesting reading. I am sure you are aware of customers who understand this and others who do not.

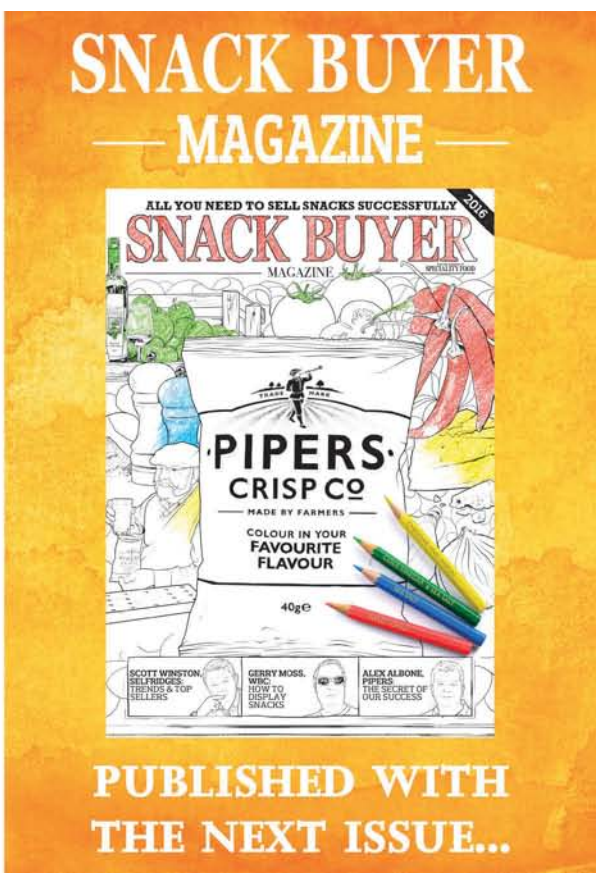
What to do now

I hope to have alerted to you to some of the challenges and issues of food safety and quality. In a nutshell you need to be vigilant, especially in the refrigerator and chiller cabinet, and ensure products are sold by the end of their shelf-life or 'best before' date. Do not let ambient stable food get too warm or the environment too wet.

Your customers will look at information on the package but remember these only provide average values and every batch will be different. The scientific complexity of artisan food is overwhelming, with chemical diversity, enzymes, and active microbial flora continuing to change food during storage. You can keep in touch with scientific developments through workshops and magazines such as this one.

dairy-solutions.com





COTSWOLD FAYRE*

-EST 1999-

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

Last Words

The final word on fine food

Jimmy Doherty

"Perks of partnership"



It's no secret that diversification has been a necessity for the whole farming industry in recent years. My vision at the beginning of the business was to increase the numbers of rare breed pigs through farming them for meat. We rear our animals slowly using traditional farming methods and the whole process from farrowing to sales in the butchery ensures that British farming heritage and traditional butchering methods are carried on for future generations. In order to make this more easily achievable, looking at ways of supporting the traditional farming side of the business soon became part of our vision.

Over the years, the business has grown. I often talk about our butchery and restaurant which are both beneficiaries of the labours of our working farm. These are both very successful parts of the business and serve as a showcase for the farm's ethos, which is so important when building a brand. We not only deliver directly to the customer from our online and on-site butchery and restaurant, but also supply a number of national restaurants. Barbecoa, Jamie's Italian, Shake Shack and the Handmade Burger Company all serve Jimmy's Farm products on their menus; these partnerships make us incredibly proud. Seeing 'Jimmy's Farm' on menus the length and breadth of the country is a real buzz for everyone here at the farm and we plan to nurture and sustainably grow these relationships over the coming years.

Partnering with local brands is also so important, and our farm shop buys its products as locally as possible. Everything from coffee to cheese, chocolate to beer is sourced from small local producers. Showcasing and supporting what East Anglia has to offer is really important and is complementary to what we do. It's essential that we can give customers exactly what they need in one trip. Our meat can be bought alongside a whole host of fresh produce from local businesses. Our roster of closely-located producers include locally-roasted Thistledown coffee, Suffolk Meadow ice cream, scotch eggs from Paul Thompson in Shotley, Suffolk Shipcord cheese and, most recently, charcuterie from New England Boar Company. We typically get inspiration from farmers markets and approach producers there, however we are also very lucky to have people coming into the shop and selling to us directly. Suppliers also tend to really look after each other and recommend one another to us. Word of mouth is often the way to source the really exciting products.

An exciting new local partnership we've just embarked on is with Aspall. Aspall has been producing cider in Suffolk for almost 300 years and we're working with them to create a special cider just for us, ready to launch in time for our food and music festival. The festival will be held right here on our farm on the 22nd and 23rd of July. It is a real celebration of the farm and local producers, and is a great chance to kick off the summer. It's grown over the years into something quite spectacular and we are so lucky to have built up a really loyal customer base who come from across the country to join us for the weekend. We're expecting 10,000 people per day to come to the farm and join the party. It's a huge amount of work for everyone involved at the farm but such a special event which encompasses everything we're all about, all in one weekend!

> "Suppliers also tend to really look after each other and recommend one another to us. Word of mouth is often the way to source the really exciting products"

TWITTER POLL

Is our sector being unfairly affected by the sugar tax?

- Yes 22%
- No 45%
- Don't know 33%

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SPECIALITY BITES

Paul Hargreaves of Cotswold Fayre



Hopefully by the time you read this column, the weather will be warmer than the current sunny but rather cold temperatures. Drinks sales for several wholesalers have been worse than normal for the last two years due to the very changeable weather.

It isn't only drinks producers that benefit from a good summer; many categories do well, as good weather increases footfall in stores and people plan parties and barbecues. I have always said that weather affects our sales at Cotswold Fayre far more than any microeconomic conditions. For this article, though, I am going to concentrate on the drinks category, as it is just about to be hit with the first ever extra food tax (except duty) based on a perceived 'naughty' ingredient. In this case, sugar.

Many new drinks have launched recently in advance of the new sugar tax with low or no sugar being their main selling point – I won't say USP as U stands for unique, and they are not. Many are using various sweeteners or natural flavourings, or in other words, chemicals! I have tried a few this week, and to be honest, I dislike the chemical aftertaste, which always seems to be present. What I am left with on my palate is the chemical taste rather than the flavour of the drink itself.

So, should we in the speciality food sector be advocating sugar replacements or encouraging drinks manufacturers to maintain their recipes and stick to good taste at the risk of a higher-priced drink? The answer to me is obvious. The speciality food sector is all about taste, and we should not compromise that. As usual, this ill-conceived government strategy is using a sledge-hammer to crack a nut, and is likely to penalise the wrong companies, namely those making good quality drinks with moderate amounts of sugar.

> "We have an ideal opportunity to lobby the new government for change. Let's do it!"

The bill was meant to hit the multinationals that were pushing huge servings of fizzy pop down the throats of the majority population. However, they will always have money to bypass the law, and don't really care what they are putting into their customers' bodies as long as it doesn't affect their bottom line. Moreover, with their huge advertising budgets, they will direct consumers away from their sugary drinks towards those with chemicals in. Lawrence Moore of Belvoir Fruit Farms, talking about this discrepancy says, "Tango, as an example, will be tax-free, but the most popular drinks in farm shops and delis with clean ingredients actually attract the top rate of tax."

No doubt it will be confectionery and bakery products next, with potentially another corresponding drop in the quality of product. I think it is time that we as a sector stood up and made our voice heard. A healthy and balanced diet including quality products in moderation isn't doing anyone any harm, and these products should be exempted from any extra tax as they are all more expensive anyway! As I have been writing this article a general election has been announced and there may not be time for this legislation to go through parliament before then, so we have an ideal opportunity to lobby the new government for change. Let's do it!

5 MINUTES WITH... GRACIE TYRELL

co-founder of Squirrel Sisters



GRACIE (LEFT) WITH SISTER SOPHIE

WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
Working in film and television.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
Working in a local handbag shop.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Being happy and healthy.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
Temping.

DO YOU LIKE TO COOK?
I love to cook!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
Getting to work with my sister doing something we're passionate about.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
Packing orders ourselves.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Sweet.

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY – IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO CHANGE?
The tax on healthy foods!

TEA OR COFFEE?
It depends on how tired I am but I love tea.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
Anything Italian, like homemade pasta with a delicious pesto.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
Life is about balance #TreatYourHealth.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
We both tried goat breast in Vietnam – I wouldn't eat it again!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
Current favourites are *The Chimp Paradox* and *The Diet Myth*.

DIARY DATES

May

18th–6th July
COTSWOLD FAYRE CHRISTMAS ROADSHOWS
Nationwide
cotswold-fayre.co.uk

23rd–25th
CAFFE CULTURE SHOW
Olympia, London
caffecultureshow.com

31st–3rd
ROYAL BATH & WEST SHOW
Somerset
bathandwest.com

June

4th–5th
FANTASTIC FOOD + DRINK
Sydney
fantasticfood.com.aus

8th–9th
FREE FROM FOOD EXPO
Barcelona
freefromfoodexpo.com

14th–18th
TASTE OF LONDON
Regents Park, London
london.tastefestivals.com

15th–18th
BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW SUMMER
NEC, Birmingham
bbcgoodfoodshowsummer.com

18th–20th
BELLAVITA
Business Design Centre, London
bellavita.com

22nd–25th
ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW
Edinburgh
royalhighlandshow.org

24th–2nd
PEMBROKESHIRE FISH WEEK
Pembrokeshire
pembrokeshirefishweek.co.uk





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