

SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS



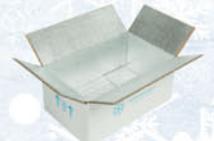
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PLASTIC

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the February issue of *Speciality Food*. This has been an inspiring issue for us to put together, as, like many people in the UK, the team is becoming more and more conscious of the impact that our decisions have on the environment (and ourselves). We've looked at the ethical side to the food and drink industry on page 22, where we talk to eco-minded businesses and those using their position to do good. We've spoken to Renée Elliott, founder of Planet Organic and co-founder of Beluga Bean, about her pioneering business and how her journey in recognising the benefits of an organic approach began (p. 30). This issue also contains a piece about sustainable retail, and the steps you can take to get started (p. 11).

You'll also find a preview of BlasCymru/Taste Wales 2019 (p. 16), my picks of the products on show at the upcoming IFE (p. 6), a selection of delightful afternoon tea treats (p. 20) and so much more.

Holly

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Brexit fatigue is giving way to contingency planning as tensions build over supply logistics, according to reports from a number of fine food businesses.

For indie retailers in the fine food sector, the question 'to stockpile or not?' is as divisive an issue as membership of the EU itself. "I have actually built a warehouse and filled it with months of grocery supply," said Andreas Georghiou, who runs a premium greengrocers in Chelsea Green. "However, that will not help with our fresh fruit and veg." Others are taking similar measures. "We're likely to stockpile at least on best sellers," tweeted The Red Beetle, an e-tailer specialising in authentic Italian food. "It's not ideal for cashflow, plus it's always risky to have too much stock sitting there, but unless there's an agreement and a plan before mid to late February, I have no other choice. I can't have an empty store and need happy customers."

Last month it emerged that Tesco has retained its extra provision of freezers, originally rented to increase capacity for Christmas, to stockpile extra frozen foods. The retailer's contingency planning for Brexit will see the extra storage running for the rest of 2019, with chief executive Dave Lewis telling reporters Tesco is "working with our suppliers to think through sensible opportunities to improve stockholding closer to the market." M&S has also revealed

Stockpiling: a Brexit dilemma

A Brexit-weary industry is divided in its preparations for possible disruption ahead, according to *Speciality Food* readers

that stockpiling is part of its contingency planning; Iceland and Sainsbury's are reportedly not holding extra stock.

Despite the arguments for making extra provision, some point to the economic difficulties of this short-term strategy. "We will not be stockpiling," said a spokesperson at Millars General Store, a wholefood shop in South London specialising in vegan food and drink. "With sales flat-lining and costs rising we wouldn't have the money to do so. Or the space. It's probably best for the shelves to have empty spaces as quick as possible; it would keep us on our toes regarding new routes to different produce earlier." Not everyone has been affected; traders in non-perishables may escape the worst of the stress. "This drama was easy to predict," says Daniel

Humphrey of whisky subscription retailer Summerton Club, "so we made sure two years ago that it didn't matter. As alcohol doesn't move freely in the EU currently, what happens in the long run doesn't impact us as much as others, we are just talking to more non-EU suppliers now."

For manufacturers, guaranteeing access to raw materials – especially perishable items that rely on frictionless transit across EU borders – is a real headache. "We've been stockpiling for sometime now and will be ordering more to store after last night's result," said Adam Barlow, founder of indulgent snack brand Simply Trios, the day after the Government's Withdrawal Bill was defeated. "We've run out of room in our own storage facility and will be having to rent our further space."

Larger manufacturers are also taking steps; cereal bar brand Eat Natural is reportedly importing extra Belgian chocolate to ensure a steady supply but won't be stockpiling for its made-to-order bars. Others are more fatalistic. "I refuse to waste time and energy on something so uncertain as the Brexit outcome," says Kalina Halatcheva, founder of snack brand Nouri Health. "When it comes we will deal with it in the best way possible, but meanwhile it's business as usual with so many other things to worry about."

"I'm not stockpiling as the outlay is prohibitive and I can't buy enough to make a difference," says Northern Ireland-based confectioner Linda McGibbon, whose company Sea Sugar retails online. "Plus, there are more pressing issues. The island of Ireland is my main market and now

Great Britain is considered export I'm being forced to rethink. Imagine not being able to trade with part of your country!" Others agree. "It's business as usual," says Sheffield baker Jane Stammers of Tipple Tails. "I can't afford to stockpile enough to make a difference, and what will be will be. I'm more interested in the changing retail environment on our high streets, but don't think anyone is paying much attention to that!"

The British Retail Consortium has previously pointed out the challenges of leaving the EU at the end of March, when British seasonal produce has yet to hit shelves and pre-Easter stocking will be at its height. "Except for early December, it's hard to think of a more problematic time for Brexit to be scheduled for and this will only exacerbate the impact on our supply chains and British consumers," blogged the BRC's director of food and sustainability, Andrew Opie, back in October.

In the absence of a clear picture of how the next few months will pan out, many food and drink businesses are taking each day as it comes. "It's business as usual for us," says Sanjay Aggarwal of West Midlands' spice blend maker Spice Kitchen. "There's no point in worrying about Brexit when we have no idea what is happening. It feels a little like the Millennium bug for us!"

Are you stockpiling? Share your story with us via email to editorial@specialityfoodmagazine.com

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JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES



“We need to talk about Christmas”

In the final article I wrote at the end of last year I suggested it could be a successful Christmas based on the fact that there were four ‘good’ shopping Saturdays before the big day. Another theory bites the dust! The general opinion is that it was a bad Christmas, based on numerous trading results from the big retailers. Two other narratives seem to have emerged along the lines that the rush starts later and later each year and that Christmas is no longer the force it used to be. (As for the four ‘good’ Saturdays theory – RIP).

At first glance these two narratives seem to have merit. For us December got off to a slow start: 3.1% down in the first week, 3.3% down in the second week, 6.4% up in Christmas week and ending up just 0.3% by New Year’s Eve just like Tesco! One thing did not help was Storm Deirdre. I cannot speak lowly enough of this meteorological phenomenon. On Saturday 15th December we were down 14.5% on the previous year. It was not just ‘A rainy day in London Town’, to misquote Mr Sinatra, it was more ‘Darkness at Noon’ by Arthur Koestler. Storm Deirdre therefore takes its rightful place in Shepherd’s Mammoth Book of Excuses. It is important to record that online sales for us grew by 48% in December (eat your heart out Deirdre) and without this Christmas sales would have been disappointing.

However, despite the slew of disappointing retail sales figures in the UK and abroad, was the Christmas trading season really as bad as it is being made out? Has there been a disconnect between perception and reality?

When mariners at sea in years gone by, including Christopher Columbus, looked for land they analysed clouds, rainfall, floating sticks and telltale birds for signs of its proximity. Are there similar signs to suggest that Christmas remains as significant as it has always been for retailers?

Although it seems likely that the rush is coming later, by looking at our sales figures I have noticed that the Christmas week in 2018 provided 34% of the monthly sales. In 2010 it was 36%, in 1999 it was 38% and in 1995 it contributed 40% of the total monthly sales. So the theory that the rush is coming later may actually depend more on the day of the week that Christmas falls on.

Similarly, the view that ‘Fings ain’t what they used to be’ regarding Christmas sales in general also looks shaky. I do not have much evidence to back this up, but over the past five years Christmas has steadfastly produced 11.7% of our annual sales. In 1995 it was just under 11%. Over the same period, November has declined by nearly 1%.

Undoubtedly trading conditions were very difficult in 2018 and Christmas provided little relief, but perhaps there are a few ‘floating sticks and telltale birds’ that indicate we may see an end in sight. The problem for Christopher Columbus on his quest for the new world was that from the first sighting of floating sticks on September 16th 1492 land was not actually sighted until 12th October. By then the crew were close to mutiny.

There is still a long way to go for a general recovery, but the importance of Christmas for us is still unassailable in the speciality food calendar.



Gourmet food takes centre stage at TuttoFood 2019

In only six editions, TuttoFood has become an essential show to discover the most original food innovations. The 2019 edition, at Milan’s Fieramilano Exhibition Centre from 6th to 9th May, looks set to continue the tradition. Wine buyers will find TuttoWine, the new wine hub focusing on select operators that combines a specialised exhibition area, L’Enoteca di TuttoWine, with events and meetings.

If you want to entice your foodie customers with new and innovative products, more opportunities will be on display at TuttoDeli, the section devoted to delicatessen, freeze-dried ready-made meals, sauces and condiments and typical regional products. Other no-miss sections will be TuttoBakery, where the new interpretations of

gourmet pizza will be under the spotlight alongside special breads, ready-made bases or snacks.

If your focus is on natural foods, you don’t want to miss TuttoGreen, where you’ll find all the best in terms of macrobiotic products, herbal products, vegan products and organic products. At the previous edition in 2017, TuttoFood’s multi-faceted exhibition concept attracted more than 80,000 professional visitors from 141 countries, the most represented being Spain, France, Germany, China, the United States, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Canada and Belgium. The last show clocked an impressive 82.6% positive satisfaction index among visitors, who included some 18,400 buyers, 69% of them from the import and distribution sectors.

FRA annual conference approaches

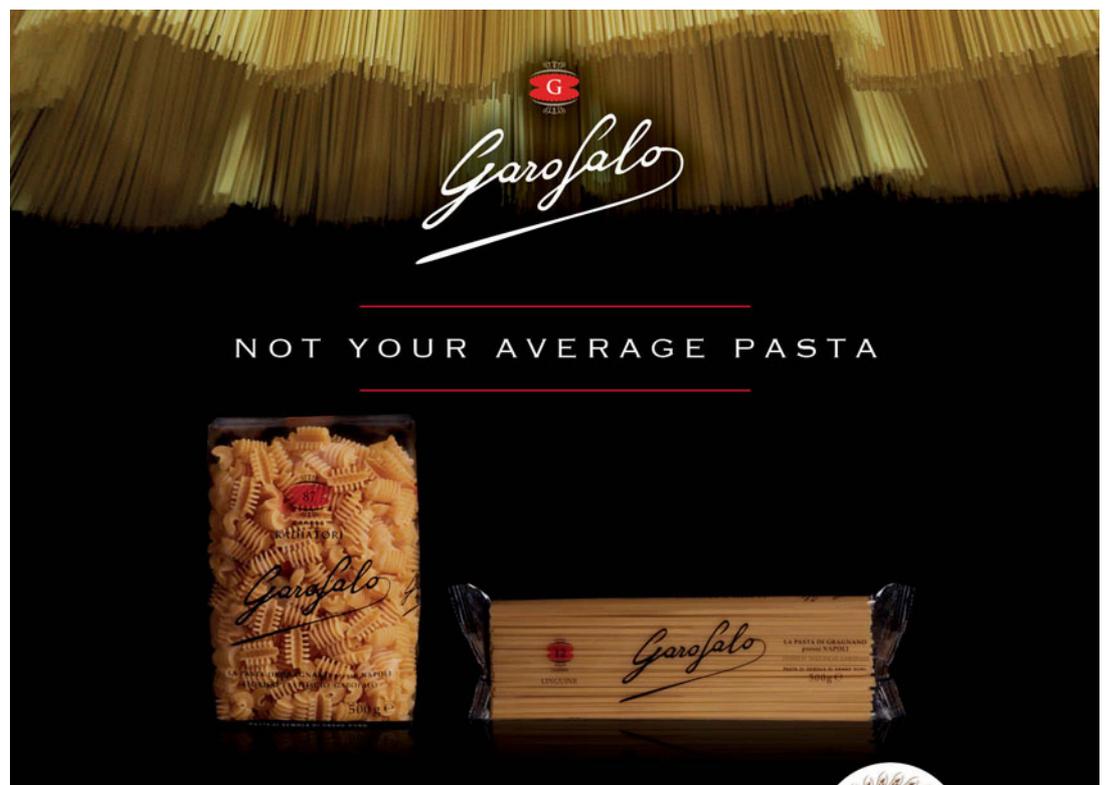
The annual conference of the Farm Retailing Association (FRA), previously known as FARMA, will take place in Oxford this month, bringing a network of farm retailers and suppliers together for a packed programme of conference seminars, workshops, trade stands and a roving networking dinner. Workshops include a host of current industry issues, including emerging technologies, margins and manpower, influencer marketing, HR advice, and customer experience.

A keynote speech on ‘Cutting Through the Noise’ by Sticky Marketing will kick off the event, and there will also escorted coach tours of local farm retail outlets themed around three retail issues: Planning for Growth; Merchandising Matters; and Millets In Depth, a case study of retail diversification. An awards dinner will name the winners in industry categories including best farmer’s market, best pick your own, and associate member of the year. The two day event, which runs from 25th to 27th February, takes place at the Double Tree by Hilton Oxford Belfry Hotel. To learn more, and book your place, visit farmretailassociation.co.uk.

The Farm Retail Association will also be present at April’s Farm Shop & Deli Show at Birmingham’s NEC.



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CHARLES CAMPION



“How did you get on with Veganuary?”

Last year saw the rise and rise of vegan food. ‘Plant-based food’ became a watchword for a new kind of dish and it quickly became a case of be there or be square. Where once restaurants had a grudging solitary vegetarian dish on the menu (all too often a puckered up stuffed vegetable), now vegan foods get to strut their stuff. There are posh vegan restaurants and veggie items are already trialling for both McDonalds and Greggs – at last you can opt for a vegetarian Happy Meal, or perhaps the vegan sausage roll appeals? The term vegan was only coined in 1944 and it is under pressure from revisionists who prefer ‘plant-based foods’ or even, for the comprehensive approach, ‘flexitarian’.

The days are gone when angry vegans show the rest of us footage from secret filming in slaughter houses as part of a moral crusade. The PR battle ground has got much busier and more sophisticated. This will be painfully obvious to anyone living in the Dorset village of Wool. The PETA group (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) floated a story suggesting that the village name of Wool should be changed to Vegan Wool because merely calling it Wool was disrespectful of sheep. Before you look at the calendar, this all happened many months away from April Fool's Day. There's another pinch of irony in discovering that Wool in Dorset is named after the Anglo-Saxon usage ‘wul’ which means freshwater spring – sheep don't get a mention.

Meanwhile, retailers both large and small will spend 2019 seeking the vegan seal of approval. Marks

& Spencer launches a vegan shoe collection. Hellmann's brought out a vegan mayo. There's even an ice cream bar called the Vegan Classic Magnum – the skimmed milk in the original has been replaced by pea protein. This is a bandwagon that will never be short of passengers. But how can a small retailer respond in a way that generates the niche sales they need justify selling these uber-trendy new options?

It also becomes important to avoid the over stocking that leads to a store-room stuffed with products marooned as the spotlight moves on to the next big thing. The trend towards veganism is a strong one and seems to have built upon a couple of intelligent precursors – meat-free Mondays or the concept of flexitarians. These initiatives are remarkable if only because there's no mention of money. Vegan food tends to cost more than its regular equivalent, but for once the public seems happy to pay a premium. The vegan banner flies proudly over ethical shopping, cooking and eating. There are said to be 10 million people in Britain who are vegetarians, which sounds like a lot. Until you turn it round and say there are about fifty million people who are not vegetarians. So, on the one hand we have food items that don't taste quite as good as the originals and cost more than the basic dishes. The battle will not be fought in the home kitchens but rather on the fringes of the marketplace, and the vegan lobby have the nous and savvy to make the most of their opportunity. Meanwhile the rest of us wait and see.

Anyone for some Waitrose Fishless Fingers?

Must-visit stands at IFE 2019

As one of the biggest shows in the food and drink industry's calendar, IFE – the International Food & Drink Event, taking place 17th-20th March at ExCeL London – is full of innovative new products and brands worth knowing. From items which tap into current trends to inspiring examples of what's to come, the show is awash with excitement. Here, Holly Shackleton, editor of *Speciality Food*, shines the spotlight on some of the products worth seeking out when you visit the show.

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100% natural, gluten-free and dairy-free, Lickalix lollies sure do tick a lot of boxes. They also offer drinkers looking for a new way to enjoy their favourite tittle an innovative way to do so. There are seven options in the range: from Strawberry & Banana to Natural Cola and Alcoholic Pina Colada Cocktail – plenty of choice to satisfy discerning slurpers. After a busy day at IFE, an ice lolly is just what the doctor ordered, right?

lickalix.com



SINGLE VARIETY CO.

Getting back to simple, good quality food and drink is a trend we're set to see a lot more of, and The Single Variety Co. is a poster brand for this movement. Its full-flavoured and varied range – think chilli jams and preserves made with everything from Maravilla Raspberries to Alphonso Mango – is packaged in eye-catching glass jars to boot.

singlevariety.co.uk



COCO CHOCOLATIER

Edinburgh-based artisan chocolatier COCO is a great example of a delicious food product which seamlessly merges into the gifting sector. Every bar is made using ethical single origin chocolate sourced from Colombia and is palm oil-free, too – plus, the dark chocolate bars are vegan. The eye-catching packaging is designed bespoke by independent artists based from Glasgow to Berlin.

coco-chocolatier.com



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Naturally delicious and great for on the go, Ape Snacks' range of coconut-based snack packs – available in Curls, Puffs and Bites, in flavours including Cheese, Lightly Salted and Thai Chilli – are great for snackers of all ages who require an on-the-go snack, and for customers following a plant-based diet (although non-vegan snackers will enjoy these too!)

apesnacks.com



THE BIG BANANA BREAD CO.

A delicious combination of ethically-sourced bananas, free-range eggs and a feel-good blend of fibre, potassium, protein, magnesium and vitamins B6 and C – all baked into a satisfying slice of banana bread – sounds good, right? I agree. Even better, these filling treats contain no artificial colours, flavours, sweeteners or preservatives.

bigbananabread.com



LAND & TIDE

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Muddled retail figures 'could be misleading'



A business academic has suggested indie retailers should be wary of reported retail figures, following contradictory stats on December trading from two leading sources.

The figures released last month saw the British Retail Consortium (BRC) report the weakest December sales in a decade whilst the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggested a year-on-year growth of 2.7% across the same period. "Comparisons with different sizes of retailers could be misleading, because retailers perform differently in the sector and over time," said Professor Ratula Chakraborty, professor of business management at the University of East Anglia's Norwich Business School. "Individual retailers can have good and bad

seasons, and fortunes often fluctuate depending on many variable factors like fashions coming and going. Sometimes small retailers perform better than large retailers."

Tracking sales in a dynamic, multi-channel retail scene may continue to yield unhelpful statistics, but Professor Chakraborty says some trends are clear. "For sure, 2019 is going to be a tough year for the retail sector," she commented "and especially for the high street. Political uncertainties about Brexit will feed through to economic uncertainties resulting in firms delaying investment decisions and consumers being more careful with their regular spending. While online retailing will inevitably continue to grow, shopping in physical stores will continue to be attractive when it engages consumers as a social and interactive activity, as well as entertaining. Nothing beats good, friendly customer service and beautiful store displays. This is where independent retailers excel and they must use it to their advantage over big bland retailers and the dreary soulless experience of online."



Wine buyers welcome back Wineteca

Next month sees the return to London of Wineteca, the trade and press event that showcases 50 of the most distinguished cellars in Italian wine production.

Industry professionals are invited to walkaround tastings to sample fine wines featured in the authoritative Vini d'Italia 2019. This year's guide lists the favourite bottles chosen by 70 experts working through a long list of 40,000 wines from more than 2,530 wineries around Italy. Visitors will have the opportunity to taste 'Tre Bicchieri' winners, selected through blind tastings and a panel selection process.

The event, which takes place on 26th March at Westminster's Royal Horticultural Halls, will include two masterclasses sharing insights into the wines present, and the Italian wine industry itself.

Wineteca will also showcase a special selection of the best value for money wines awarded in the Berebene guide. The so-called 'smartwines' can be purchased in Italy for less than €13 without compromising on quality. With importers, distributors, sommeliers, agents and buyers coming together in celebration of Italy's finest wines, all supported by the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the UK, Wineteca is set to make its mark on the profile of Italy's fine wines in the UK.

For details on exhibitors and to book your ticket visit winetecalondon.co.uk

Jamie's Shell delis start trading

Trading is underway at 500 'Jamie Oliver by Shell' food counters, offering deli-style, ready-to-eat wraps, salads and sandwiches to British motorists. The counters, which officially opened on 31st Jan, promise to deliver 'bigger, better choice - with fresh ideas, fantastic flavours and clever twist'. Critics have been swift to comment on the ethics of teaming with Shell, one of the world's top ten carbon dioxide emitters, given Jamie's previous stance on climate change.

Leicester deli shuts up shop

An award-winning Leicester deli shut its doors last month, with the owner citing low footfall. Sangita Tryner told local press that Delilah Deli would close its doors after two and a half years of trading to allow herself and husband Richard focus on their remaining Nottingham store. "There's so many things you can blame," she told *Leicestershire Live*. "Maybe changing some of the car parks to open spaces wasn't the right decision. It could just be Brexit. It could be so many things." The surviving incarnation of the store, which opened its doors in Nottingham in 2005, is reportedly thriving.



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SIAN SUTHERLAND, A PLASTIC PLANET

“Shining examples of plastic-free change”

In November last year an independent North London supermarket unveiled the UK's first Plastic Free Zones in a move that made headlines across the globe. While major supermarkets with massive financial firepower use every excuse in the book to dodge real change, Thornton's Budgens in Belsize Park are offering concrete proof that we needn't wait for the radical plastic-free future that we so badly need.

Britain's first Plastic Free Zones are filled with everything from fresh fruit and vegetables to wild game meat and bacon. They even have an eco-station with plastic free cleaning products, scrubbers and beeswrap. With goods liberated from the shackles of thick indestructible plastic packaging, the Zones give shoppers the chance to connect with food again. To smell it. To touch it. To enjoy it. Just how food shopping is meant to be.

A Plastic Planet project director, Frankie Gillard, pretty much lived in the store for 10 weeks, working with the in-store team and suppliers to fast-track what other larger stores say isn't possible. 10 weeks to take over 1700 product lines plastic free. And customers are loving it. With the exception of plastic-free pioneer Iceland, few of the grocery big-boys have done anything close to matching the gutsy, solutions-focused spirit that has become par for the course amongst Britain's great disrupters.

The demand for this change is coming from the shoppers. Fed up of supermarket aisles overflowing with plastic packaging, the public is clamouring for a change to the status quo. More than 90 per cent of respondents in a Populus poll raised serious concerns about the impact of plastic pollution and supported the introduction of a Plastic Free Aisle in their supermarket. But 12 months on, major brands have done little to

adopt an approach that addresses the public's worries. Rather than act, leading fast-moving consumer goods brands like Coca Cola have gone in the opposite direction, increasing their production of single-use plastic bottles by 1 billion in 2017 rather than rolling it back. Didn't they get the memo?

Independent food stores and speciality food producers are the lifeblood of our gastronomic economy. And it is these brands that are showing a level of vision unmatched by their larger rivals. Nimble disrupter brands are rising to the challenge set by consumers, scrapping plastic right across their product offering. Percol Coffee are leading the way in driving plastic-free innovation in their market. Last year Percol Coffee took the initiative to ensure the four million products they sell each year are packaged plastic-free as part of its 'Coffee on a Mission' rebrand. The biggest rebrand in its 30-year history, it saw the company adopt A Plastic Planet's Plastic Free Trust Mark. We introduced the Trust Mark last year in a bid to give consumers a sure-fire way of quickly identifying those products that are plastic-free and therefore guilt-free. A host of brands are set to join Percol and Iceland as Trust Mark holders throughout 2019.

2019 is all set to be a year of radical disruption across food and drink. The UK is blessed with a vibrant mix of truly pioneering food and drink brands. We are the envy of the world in so many ways. Competition is fierce and it's clear that brands that truly embrace innovation will thrive going forward. Those that don't will quickly lose ground on their rivals. It's high time major supermarkets embraced the ultra-creative approach of Britain's great disrupters.

A Plastic Planet will be exhibiting at Pro2Pac at ExCeL London on 18th-20th March.



Industry prepares for Food Tech Matters

Preparations are underway for Food Tech Matters – ‘the most influential international food-tech meet’ – which will bring over 400 of the most disruptive food tech innovators from all over the globe to London's Tobacco Dock this June.

Building on the success of the first event in November which attracted innovation leaders from brands including Nestle, PepsiCo and Kerry Foods, the June's edition is set to be bigger and better with an exciting two-day agenda line-up featuring investor and consumer insight

panels, meet-the-expert roundtables, food tech founder success stories, and new, disruptive approaches set to transform the future of sustainable food and drink. Food tech innovators from all over the world will showcase the technologies set to pave the way for the future of food, and the tailored one-to-one meetings programme provides the perfect networking opportunity for start-ups, corporates and investors to connect.

“It's an exciting time for the global food tech market, with an expected growth to over £196bn by 2022,” comments event director Briony Mansell-Lewis. “The number of investors backing food and drink start-ups has tripled in four years and even big manufacturers are getting in on the funding action. Technology is proving to be a game-changer when it comes to producing sustainable, nutritious food.”

Registration for the event opens 4th February 2019, with early bird discount saving £99 on a standard delegate rate of £349 plus VAT. For more information visit foodtechmatters.com

SSFS starts show season with a bang

Scotland's Speciality Food Show, the first British fine food trade show of the year, saw the highest number of exhibitors for a decade when it opened doors at Glasgow's SECC last month. Around 175 speciality food and drink producers showcased their products, with farm shops, delis, hotels, cafés and restaurants showing confidence despite the political upheaval underway.

“The Scottish Speciality Food and Trade Fair is always a must do on our calendar and this year didn't disappoint,” commented Sue Montgomery of Ardardan Estate's farm shop. “It's a great opportunity to see what's new in the industry, bletcher with current suppliers and find a few new jewels to stock in our farm and gift shop.”

Seminars and workshops were well attended, and *Speciality Food*

editor Holly Shackleton compered a 'Nessie's Den', a fun session with new exhibitors pitching to buyers. “Scottish food and drink just keeps getting better and better,” commented show director Mark Saunders. “Every year we see new suppliers springing up which keeps

the show fresh and interesting for the buyers. This show was no exception and buyers seemed to enjoy the variety and depth of product available, particularly from the regional food groups who supported at least 25 small unknown suppliers all seeking a toehold in the market.”



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HOME TO



UK overtakes Germany for vegan launches

Research from market watchers Mintel has reported that the UK has overtaken Germany as the world's hottest marketplace for vegan food and drink launches. "Consumers are becoming more willing than ever to expand their comfort zones," says Mintel's global food and drink analyst Edward Bergen. "To push themselves to the limit with new experiences and use social media to compete with and offer inspiration to their peers."

Value of retail property hit by online sales

The impact on rising online sales versus bricks and mortar is impacting on the value of retail property, according to new research. A report released by real estate experts Altus Group forecasts that values of retail property could fall by 15.9% this year, with 62% of major UK property owners reporting that e-commerce is damaging the trade in commercial real estate.



Community shop sector contracts

The trend for growth in community shops has reversed, with numbers of community-owned outlets falling for the first time, according to data from The Plunkett Foundation. The organisation's Better Form of Business report showed that 346 community shops were trading by the end of 2017, generating a combined turnover of 53m and contributing more than £100,000 to local projects. "This year we are delighted to see trading figures that continue to demonstrate how community businesses are at the forefront of strengthening the rural economy," says James Alcock, the Plunkett Foundation's executive director. "As well as saving vital rural services such as shops, the stand out success of community businesses is found in the social impact they achieve."

The organisation did, however, acknowledge problems with the model. "For the first time, we are in fact seeing a decline in the growth of community shops," added James. "This is an area of concern for us and shows how running a community business requires ongoing support and investment."

Raided farm shop owner calls for powers of self-defence for rural businesses

A farm shop owner whose Christmas meat orders were targeted by thieves has called on the Government to allow rural businesses more freedoms to fight back.

Andy Johnson disturbed thieves at his storeroom at Johnsons of Old Hurst near Huntingdon at 10pm on 23rd December. The balaclava-wearing gang made off with £20,000-worth of meat. "In the first moments I assumed everything was gone – I had 30 grands-worth of orders to go out the next day – but as we cleared up it was obvious the meat was stolen to order," Andy told *Speciality Food*. "We had over 300 Christmas orders boxed up but [the thieves] went through everything specifically taking 14lb turkeys and pigs in blankets. It must have

gone to a dodgy meat dealer."

It's the ninth time Johnsons, which has a shop, steakhouse restaurant and tea room on the farm premises, has been targeted. "From information we've got as a result of rewards I believe their intention would have been to trample and spray everything in the fridge to make it look like the work of vegan activists," said Andy. "My advice to any other shops that have something similar is take stock of what's actually been taken."

Security on site has been tightened, but Andy believes Government needs to act to help rural businesses protect their property. "Even if I'd seen [the gang] early and rung the police, that's a 15-minute wait. Alarms don't bother them, they know they've got time

before anyone arrives. These guys had baseball bats, crowbars and bolt croppers. The only thing that can alter the balance is if it's legal for me to confront them, and if necessary shoot them in the legs. That's the only way we'll protect rural businesses. The Government has to change the law to say that with trespassers on your land it's within your rights to fire warning shots and then protect yourself and your property if they come at you."

Andy's Christmas orders were honoured with help from the business's 70 staff, whose Christmas turkeys were returned to fill orders, and who worked to slaughter extra livestock, butcher and pack to fill gaps. "We lost £5,000 on normal shop takings on Christmas Eve but every customer who'd placed an order got what they wanted."

'Think beyond foodbanks' says industry outreach group

A charitable fund created by businesses from Suffolk's food and drink sector is calling for other regions to roll out its model and think beyond foodbanks to instigate change in rural communities.

The Suffolk Community Foundation's (SCF) Food and Drink Fund was launched in October to spread the benefits of the regions thriving fine food scene to those in the county affected by poverty, loneliness, poor mental health and lack of education. More than £80,000 in donations has been received to date, but the fund is keen to think beyond food banks when it comes to allocating the precious cash.

"What really hit home to the grant-making committee was the diversity of the projects who successfully applied," says fund chair Paddy Bishopp. Grants have been made to community-led activity projects for the vulnerable and isolated, a 'Rural Coffee Caravan' that provides active respite from loneliness, and many more diverse projects. "Food and drink is not just fuel for life," says Paddy. "It helps bring people together and support those less fortunate. We need to celebrate the food and drink of Suffolk but we also need to use it to make a difference."

Learn more at suffolkfoodanddrink.co.uk

Settlement scheme fee scrap welcomed by industry

The Government's decision to ditch a £65 fee for EU citizens applying to stay – and work – in the UK has been applauded by an industry hardened to bad news.

"We welcome today's announcement that the Government is planning on scrapping the fee associated with the EU Settlement Scheme," said Ian Wright, chief executive of the Food and Drink Federation. "The food and drink manufacturing industry employs 117,000 highly valued EU workers, making up almost a third of our workforce, and their contribution to our sector is vital.

The FDF was one of the first trade organisations to call for certainty for EU nationals. And says it's encouraged by the development. "Further work is now needed to make sure the right to stay and the Settlement Scheme is swiftly and effectively communicated to eligible EU citizens wishing to stay in the UK," said Mr Wright, "and that employers are provided with the tools needed to support their workforce. The ongoing lack of certainty for business about our immediate and longer-term relationship with our nearest and biggest trading partner continues to undermine business confidence."

Label confusion sees allergy sufferers struggle

Just 37% of British consumers find it easy to spot which allergens a product is free from by studying the label, suggests a new report.

The findings, from Mintel, suggest an obstacle in growth of the free-from market – estimated to be worth £837m in 2018 – since 48% of Brits say they or someone in their household avoids at least one ingredient.

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HOW TO START

- **Promote customers to bring their own containers to any fresh counters you have (which are already staffed with weighing scales so an easy transition)** – this will help you build towards selling in bulk elsewhere in the store
- **Talk to your customers** – what packaging are they frustrated with, and how can you help them?
- **Look at financing.** A lot of kit can be financed at a reasonable rate which allows you to spread the cost

The subject of waste is big news right now, in the food industry and beyond. Across the sector – from foodservice and chefs to manufacturers and retail – professionals are looking at new ways to address this growing threat to the environment. From avoiding food waste to excess packaging, the industry is offering support to retailers.

Leah Riley Brown, sustainability policy advisor at the British Retail Consortium said, “The BRC’s Better Retail Better World initiative builds on a framework set out by the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to drive greater industry cooperation and signatories are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, cutting deforestation, improving plastic packaging and eliminating modern slavery.” So retail is part of a wider framework of environmentally-conscious business. How can independents get involved? “Responsible retailers are progressively and collaboratively working to help consumers navigate the challenge of buying ethically sourced and produced products on the high street. Examples of how our members are addressing the challenges of sustainability include cutting down on the use of black plastic (which can’t be recycled) and ensuring the sustainable sourcing of foods such as seafood, palm oil and soya.”

Catherine Conway is the founder of Unpackaged, the first modern zero waste food shop in London

SUSTAINABLE RETAIL

How is retail satisfying consumer demand for sustainability, and can more be done?

in 2006. Since then, the business has evolved to help other shops integrate bulk and refills into their offer – allowing customers to reuse packaging or bring receptacles from home, and retailers to sell products loose; in effect offering a sustainable shopping experience and avoiding the use of unnecessary single-use plastic.

“Sustainable retail is about a lot more than selling some refills,” says Catherine. “To be truly sustainable retailers must take a holistic look at their supply chain, back of house, front of house and the products they sell.” But how to get going? “The first step is always

an audit of all of these areas, gain an understanding of where the business is at, have a vision of where you want the business to get to, and make a clear commitment and timeline of how you will reach your goals. Such a timeline should be sustainable and manageable – it’s better to take longer and do it properly than try and do everything at once, and give up because it’s too much work.”

Efforts to go waste-free comes with its own problems, as Tom Pells and Jeanette Wong, co-owners of The Clean Kilo, a zero waste retailer in Birmingham explain. “In terms of stock, fresh produce is really

tricky because being zero waste we don’t want food waste,” says Tom. “It’s a question of having things in stock so people know it’s there but not too much.” Pricing is also an issue, particularly so when the pair are sourcing from local, artisan producers. “Trying to balance the amount we buy – keeping our ethos of local products – can be tricky,” says Jeanette.

For Tom and Jeanette, the task of going entirely zero waste is “a journey more than a destination. If you see it as a destination you’re only going to lose.” It’s a journey we’re all on: “I recommend customers try to eliminate one thing every couple of weeks, not overwhelm themselves because otherwise they’re going to feel defeated. Don’t overwhelm yourself. It’s a long process.”

INVESTMENT AND EDUCATION

Changing your business model to be more sustainable can mean a considerable investment, and Catherine agrees that the kit does cost money – “but a properly designed refill set up with save money in the long run because there will be less staff time involved in helping customers; messaging will help the area look abundant and confident, which will generate more sales. The refill model in itself creates repeat business – when a customer starts refilling, they will keep coming back to you.”

“Consumer education is everything,” says Catherine. “Once your customers are au fait

with the system, they’ll find it a breeze. The initial hump is in getting them over to move from single use to refill, so be very clear in how you want them to shop, and make it easy for them to do so – for example, special offers the first time they refill, holding an event with lots of staff to talk them through it etc.” Jeanette agrees: “It’s a case of making sure people are prepared when they come in, and know our product range. People come in with baskets, containers, re-used cheese wraps... It’s going really well for uss.”

The move to refill could be a relatively easy transition for independents in the sense that their customers are quite open minded already – they’re shopping at indies for the experience, so will be open to new ways of doing things. Jeanette points out, though, that in terms of managing this new approach, “Having no packaging makes it labour intensive because you have to clean dispensers, do a lot more back end work.”

So why should you and your customers make the change? Catherine answers: “Customers will save money. Bulk products are better value than pre-packs, especially when the product is coming directly from the producer.” Packaging also comes into play; “avoiding packaging waste enables your customers to shop according to their values, and avoid unnecessary waste which they may feel guilty about contributing to when they shop elsewhere.”

“ To be truly sustainable retailers must take a holistic look at their supply chain, back of house, front of house and the products they sell ”



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TRASH COOKING

If you use every last crust, fish skin and apple peel, you're not mean, you're on-trend, says Sally-Jayne Wright

At The Three Chimneys restaurant in Skye, head chef Scott Davies is using leftover pear skins to make verjus – a vinegar-like condiment. Radish stems and cabbage stalks will go into kimchi pickle to accompany miso-glazed quail and roast cauliflower. Once this was good housekeeping; now it's good PR. Frugality is so fashionable that what claims to be the UK's first ever zero-waste restaurant, Silo, has opened in Brighton.

WHAT IS TRASH COOKING?

It's when you turn edible food destined for the bin into a new dish. For example, if apple juice has fermented, you add it to a sourdough bread mixture; when that bread is stale, you make bread-and-butter pudding.



HAVEN'T CANNY COOKS ALWAYS DONE THAT?

Yes, but that was before we began ploughing thousands of tonnes of edible food into landfill and anaerobic digesters. Bread is the food we bin most, and though we love to blame supermarkets, most waste – almost 50% – occurs at home.

The Love Food Hate Waste (LFHW) campaign launched in 2007 by the not-for-profit body Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), publicised the problem. Such documentaries as BBC Two's *Great British Waste Menu* (2011) and *Hugh's War on Waste* (2015) helped bring it to the fore.

WHO'S HELPING TO USE UP ALL THAT BREAD?

Toast Ale is an award-winning beer brewed from fresh bread donated by sandwich producers and bakers. Proceeds go to the environmental charity, Feedback, which aims to halve food waste by 2025.

WHEN DID WE BECOME SO WASTEFUL?

Use-by dates and lost cookery skills have a lot to answer for. WRAP has lobbied government and food businesses to move safer foods like hard cheese and pasteurised juices from 'mainly having a use-by date, to almost always having a best-before date'.

ANY TRASH COOKING TRIVIA I SHOULD KNOW?

There's a recipe website to help bartenders reuse waste. From *Trashtikisucks.com*, mixologists can learn how to infuse white rum

“Bread is the food we bin most, and though we love to blame supermarkets, most waste – almost 50% – occurs at home”

with leftover avocado stones and pistachio shells to create a whole new cocktail ingredient.

MARMITE IS THE ORIGINAL TRASH COOKING PRODUCT, ISN'T IT?

You're right. The hugely popular, savoury spread is made from a by-product of the brewing industry.

AND THERE'S A NEW VEGAN PRODUCT MADE FROM A BY-PRODUCT, ISN'T THERE?

Right again. Aquafaba is the starchy water left behind after chickpeas and other pulses have been cooked or stored. It's the liquid you pour away when you open the can. It makes an excellent vegan-friendly egg substitute for meringues, mayonnaise, mousse and marshmallows.

HMM, CHICKPEA WATER. SOUNDS A BIT LIKE AUSTERITY. ARE FOODS LIKE THESE LUXURIOUS ENOUGH FOR FINE FOOD PURVEYORS?

Absolutely. Trend Watch likes Rubies in the Rubble Aquafaba Mayonnaise, £3.69 for 190g. The pleasant acidity reminds us of our favourite non-vegan, French mayo made by Benedicta. If you have many vegan customers, try ready-made aquafaba powder by a brand such as Vor Foods. Another delicious ingredient made from a waste product and sold by Ocado is Hunter & Gather Extra Virgin Avocado Oil. Amy Moring, co-founder says:

“We use avocados from small-scale farmers in Kenya that are rejected for export to supermarkets. Previously, fruit that was too small was slightly discoloured or the wrong colour would be left to rot.”

At Paxton & Whitfield cheesemongers in London's Jermyn Street, the Sloe, Fig & Almond Fruit Slice (£4.95/100g) sold to accompany fine cheeses uses sloes leftover from the sloe gin-making process.

Foxhole Gin is the first sustainable, premium gin made using a base distilled from English wine grapes, or more precisely, the pulpy mass of skins, flesh and pips known as 'marc'. Every year, the industry throws away tonnes of the stuff. Instead of discarding it, the makers of Foxhole send the marc back for a second pressing. Formerly lost juice is collected, fermented and turned into an English wine. This wine is destined for the Foxhole Spirits distillery, and, ultimately, gin.

ANY OTHER GOOD PRODUCTS?

If you enjoy grilled salmon but never eat the skin, did you know it's where most of the Omega 3 is found? It was only a matter of time before someone invented Sea Chips – good-for-you crisps made from salmon skins.

In Rubies in the Rubble's healthier new Tomato Ketchup, pear skins which would otherwise be discarded replace half the sugar. Snact's new fruit jerky and banana bars use up wonky fruit and surplus bananas; as a bonus, the packaging is compostable.

HOW CAN WE USE THE TRASH COOKING TREND IN OUR CAFE?

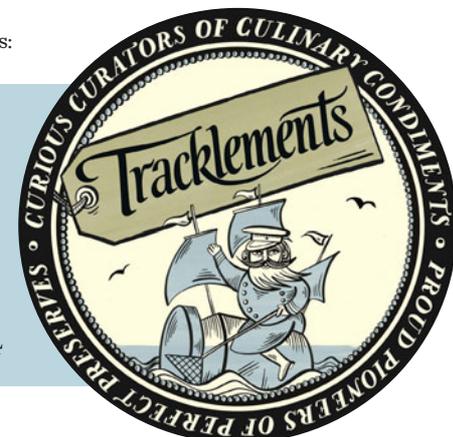
Introduce a cheaper, pre-bookable set menu for students, pensioners and the eco-aware. Turn wonky veg, potato peel and veg tops into soup and use pasta trimmings and leftover cheese in bakes. Make sure dishes sound and taste appetising and spell out that the purpose is to cut food waste.

WILL THE MAKE-DO-AND-MEND TREND LAST?

To the extent that food producers have always made surplus and leftovers into new products, yes. Ethical eating and sustainability are also macro-trends. But bins have to be worth raiding so double-check worthy brands for deliciousness. Bon appetit, waste watchers!

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FOLLOW THE CROWD

Crowdfunding has taken off in a big way since the term was first coined in 2006, and there are now a growing number of sites such as Kickstarter, Crowdfunder, CrowdCube, Seedrs and Indiegogo, offering an alternative avenue for start-ups to get off the ground or for more established brands to expand, says Jane Wolfe



A plethora of food and drink entrepreneurs have used crowdfunding as a way to raise funds while at the same time spreading the word about their brand, from The Uncommon English which looked to Indiegogo in July to successfully raise £25k for an urban winery to produce its sparkling wine in a can, to Active Root which raised over £6k on Kickstarter to bring its energy drink to market, and healthy ice cream brand Oppo, a three-time Seedrs campaigner which oversubscribed within minutes of going public with its first foray in 2015 and becoming the platform's most overfunded campaign and the fastest ever food or drink brand to reach its target.

And with a report by Seedrs – which in 2012 was the first equity crowdfunding platform to receive regulatory approval from the Financial Services Authority – stating that food and beverage deals are joint top in terms of the number of its funded deals, at 11%, crowdfunding is proving an easily accessible means to raise capital for small businesses in this sector.

The idea behind crowdfunding is that small amounts of money are invested by large numbers of investors through online campaigns which are usually either donations-based, where investors don't expect a return; rewards-based, where the investors receive some kind of benefit such as a discount or free products, but don't receive any equity or ownership in the brand; or equity-based, where investors get a stake in the company, and therefore the opportunity for a future financial return. If a pitch fails to reach its funding target within the allotted time, either an extension is given or it's cancelled and no payments are taken from investors.

Added extras

So apart from hard cash, what benefits does crowdfunding offer brands compared with more

conventional investment strategies? Andrew Hunt, CEO and co-founder of Aduna, which in 2017 successfully crowdfunded on Seedrs, explains that as a social business supporting small-scale producers in Africa, it was important that investors were aligned with the brand's long-term mission and impact. "Many conventional investors in consumer brands don't fit into this category. They may also be investing on harsh terms and seeking a rapid exit. The great thing about the crowd is that only people who are excited about your business and believe in what you stand for will invest."

Joe Hill, co-founder of One Planet Pizza, which crowdfunded on Seedrs on 2016 after initially rolling out its vegan pizzas to its local vegan and veggie community in Norwich, agrees that like-minded investors bring something extra to the table. "As a family run start-up, we realized that we needed more than just capital to turn this idea into a successful business. We also needed the right people to believe in us and buy into our venture. This is when we knew that crowdfunding was the right decision."

"The campaign was a huge success for several reasons," says Hill. "Firstly, we raised the money needed to invest in a refrigerated van, a production kitchen and everything in between, so we could increase production. And secondly, the local influencers, bloggers, family and friends who helped us launch the company were now physically invested in it. They don't just want it to succeed, they want it to continue to succeed. Crowdfunding provided us with something that money couldn't – it created 140 investors all motivated for the company to flourish. At an early stage of growth, this proved immeasurable in our success."

"Raising on Seedrs enabled us to take on much-needed cash injections at a crucial stage of our business growth, so the importance can't be underestimated," says Hunt,

adding that another plus point, particularly for a consumer brand, is that investors can also be brand ambassadors. "While this can be difficult to measure, it is definitely a positive factor," he says.

Funding growth

Already a successful brand in 2017, listed in H&B and Ocado, Hunt explains what prompted the campaign: "Since launching in 2012, we've taken our African baobab and moringa from obscurity to being established superfoods within health food retail. This has been no mean feat – but if we want to achieve

"We did a crowdfunding campaign in 2014 to get SNACT started and to launch our fruit jerky, so it made sense to us that we'd go down the same route to launch another range," says brand co-founder Michael Minch-Dixon. "It went well, it was fun to run and we overfunded, so it was a success. We've crowdfunded twice but have also raised investment through more conventional routes," he adds.

"Crowdfunding can be extremely rewarding – it's a great feeling to see that people buy into your project/idea and that they're willing to part with their cash to support you personally –

brilliant three-minute film. After that you need to ensure you have at least one-third of your target committed from cornerstone investors before 'going live'. If you have these three things in place and combine them with a well planned email and social media campaign, then you stand every chance of being successful."

"The downside is that it's public and it's a lot more work than people probably imagine," adds Minch-Dixon. "The main lessons came from our first campaign; it's a full time job and you really have to commit your time to reaching out to people and to having those conversations. We probably wouldn't crowdfund again in the context of SNACT as we've done it twice now, but who knows!"

First choice for start-ups?

"I think it's definitely on its way to becoming the first-choice form of financing," says Hunt. "For many small businesses it compares favourably to venture capital, particularly in terms of the key terms like valuation and preference shares, but also in keeping control of your business – it is often better to have lots of small investors than one big one who can flex their muscles. I like that it has democratized the process of investing in start-ups – something that was previously only the domain of wealthy angel investors. This means that pretty much anyone can invest in businesses they believe in."

"From my experience, crowdfunding is a great option for start-ups to explore," agrees Hill. "I'd say one of the main benefits is exposure – if done the right way, a campaign can become a great marketing tool to help reach the right people and generate real excitement about the products/service. Having lots of smaller investors can also be advantageous simply by creating a situation wherein more people are spreading the word and talking about the start-up. It could lead to a domino effect that'll get the name out there."

“Crowdfunding provided us with something that money couldn't – it created 140 investors all motivated for the company to flourish. At an early stage of growth, this proved immeasurable in our success”

our vision of impacting the lives of millions of small-scale producers then we can't stop there. We needed to develop new, more convenient product formats to appeal to a broader, more mainstream audience. And this requires investment."

This July Aduna did a follow-on campaign to help fund the launch of two new product ranges – African Super-Teas and Superfood Energy Bars – and scale up production and marketing. "In the first campaign our target was £350k and we smashed that in just 48 hours, going on to raise a total of £471k from 370 investors. In the last campaign we achieved a similar result – raising £428k against a target of £300k," says Hunt.

When snack food brand SnaCT, which uses surplus fruit and veg to produce its range, launched a rewards-based Crowdfunder campaign in 2017 it was in order to get its trio of Banana Bars off the ground by raising £10k to make the first run of products.

but you have to make sure you really plan your campaign carefully before it goes live and that you articulate really carefully why people should give you money (in exchange for equity or rewards)," he explains.

Campaign commitment

Indeed to stand any chance of success, a crowdfunding campaign needs effective forward planning and serious commitment, as Hunt explains: "I think the most important thing to recognize is that crowdfunding starts with your own network. You will need to be out there pitching your business in the 'real world' several months in advance of going live, and need to have generated real commitments and momentum. If you expect that you can just make a nice video, put it on the platform and the money will just roll in, you will be in for a nasty surprise!"

"Firstly, you need a strong growth (and brand) story to go to market with, then you need to turn this into a



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BLASCYMRU/ TASTE WALES 2019

Top class speakers prepare for Wales's premier international food and drink conference

Some of the food world's greatest success stories, the best speakers, and the sector's leading thinkers have been lined-up for BlasCymru / TasteWales 2019 (20th-21st March), as Welsh food and drink continues to shine on the international stage.

Headlining the packed conference programme, titled Accelerating Sustainable Growth – faster, smarter, cleaner, is Claus Meyer,

famous for Noma, four-times winner of the coveted World's Best Restaurant title, who credits his unconventional approach for his phenomenal success, which also includes fuelling the Nordic food revolution and training young people in the Bolivian food sector. Claus will draw on his experiences as a gastronome, businessman and philanthropist to show how Welsh food and drink producers can stand

out and inspire at home and across the world.

In addition to Claus Meyer, Tansy Drake will share her insights into the phenomenal success of innocent smoothies, where she spent nine years helping to build the brand into the powerhouse it's known as today. Chris Hayward will draw on his market expertise at Kantar Worldpanel to explain the changing demands of consumers while

Kateline Porritt of thefoodpeople will unveil the latest food and drink trends from across the world. Social media guru David Levin, whose services have been engaged by major brands like KitKat and PG Tips, will explain how to create social content to build food business success.

Conference MC, Sara Edwards, who has pursued her own interest in food throughout her successful broadcast career said, "All of these speakers have two things in common: they approach things differently, and they've been hugely successful because they think outside of the box. I am so looking forward to being part of this amazing event at such a critical time for the sector, and I am really looking forward to hearing how 'disruptive thinking' can inspire Welsh food and drink producers to do things differently, including exploring the opportunities of new technology in the food industry and how to embed innovation into business practice."

BlasCymru/TasteWales 2019

IN DETAIL

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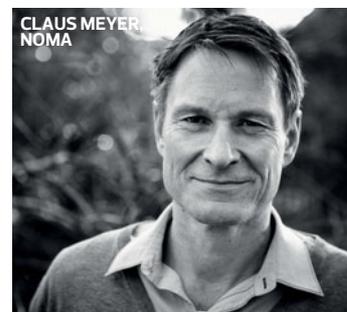
WHERE: Celtic Manor Resort, Newport

WEB: tastewales.com

is being held on 20th–21st March at the world-class Celtic Manor Resort, once again bringing together producers, buyers and food industry professionals for this signature international food and drink trade event and conference. Delegates and buyers will be drawn from across Europe, the US, Middle East and as far afield as Japan to discover innovative Welsh produce, to network and do business.

Food and drink giant Princes has also recently been announced as the headline sponsor for the 2019 international trade event and conference.

Visit tastewales.com for more information and to register your attendance at the event.



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Brook Vegan Foods

Brook Vegan Foods is a new venture, launched by the team behind award-winning vegan restaurant The Brook. Born from a desire to reach more people with delicious vegan food, our range of frozen, fully prepared 'home' meals have been developed to enable quick, easy and exciting plant-based eating for an environmentally-conscious, flexitarian generation. Made by chefs in small batches, with minimal ingredients and no additives, our range is designed to represent the gourmet experience and show-stopping dishes we're known for.
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Great British Biscotti

Dorset's most discerning biscuiters have done the unthinkable, turning the humble coffee dunking biscotti into something altogether debonair, courtesy of their deliciously decadent portfolio of sweet and savoury flavours that include:

For savoury snackers:

Jalapeno & Cheddar, Wild Garlic & Rosemary, Stilton & Raisin, Red Onion Marmalade & Walnut, Fennel & Cheddar and Sun-Dried Tomatoes & Olives

For sweet-minded biscuit aficionados:

Chocolate Orange, Banoffee Pie, Belgian Choc, Coffee & Sour Cherry Double Choc and White Chocolate, Cranberries & Pistachio

Whilst our full-bodied savoury flavours have the foodie gravitas to accompany any well-stocked cheeseboard or charcuterie tray, our sweet variants will bring extra wow to any well-deserved coffee break.

Double-baked biscotti are made to be savoured slowly not scoffed at high speed because we Brits bake biscuits like nobody else!

greatbritishbiscotti.co.uk



Pep & Lekker

For too long nutritious, vegan-friendly snacking has been falsely stereotyped as either 'depressingly disappointing' and 'overtly worthy' or 'devilishly indulgent' but bad for you.

The award-winning Seed Snacks were launched in Autumn 18 to dispel the lazy, urban myth that better-for-you snacking meant drab, dreary nibbles devoid of flavour, imagination or whole-hearted appetite appeal.

As an enthusiastic amateur and always-on-the-go commuter, Susan Gafsen wanted a nutritious nibble that brought tasty, clean deck oomph to her day, in addition to compostable, planet-friendly packaging.

"As someone with a lovely yet lazy vegan son," explains Susan, "I became increasingly agitated by the deluge of spurious health claims or foggy ingredient decks (that were anything but all-natural) that dominated so many vegan treat packs."

In addition, low-calorie Seed Snacks are baked for extra SNAP and use apple puree as a binding agent which removes the need for any needless oil!

pepandlekker.com



The Protein Ball Co.

A perfect balance of protein and fibre, these 100% natural, no added sugar Breakfast Balls are set to reinvigorate the most important meal of the day, giving consumers an on-the-go and nutrition-packed choice for breakfast or any time of the day.

Available in three delicious flavours: Apple + Blueberry, Hazelnut + Cacao and Strawberry + Vanilla, each 45g snack pack contains six bite-sized Breakfast Balls boasting 5.4g protein and high fibre.

Plus, they're made in Sussex, are vegan-friendly and gluten-free, and contain no added sugar.

0207 117 2631
theproteinballo.com



The Pished Fish

The Pished Fish is on a bold, single-minded mission to revive salmon's unapologetic swagger, coupling the noble fish's long-standing reputation for 'clean living' and 'nutritional wealth' with a more dashing and alluring identity. Such a mission is pretty much assured when you pair this thoroughbred fish with best-in-class botanicals and alcohol, prior to smoking it over snug bundles of scented British wood.

Initially famed for such elegant offerings as Augustus Gloop (raspberry vodka and blueberries), Dark & Stormy (rum, ginger, lime zest and Agave nectar) Erik the Red (aquavit, juniper, star anise and beetroot) & most recently Sozzled Santa (brandy, cinnamon, nutmeg & clementine zest), the last festive break saw our Sussex smoker introduce a game-changing Designated Driver line (juniper & cherry-infused smoke) to target those salmon enthusiasts who want to stay off the sauce whilst appreciating the finest slow-cured salmon our island has to offer.

thepishedfish.com



Tims Dairy

Try these new, contemporarily branded Greek style bio-live and lactose free yogurts inspired by Tims Dairy's London roots and celebrating their 70th year as a family business. Partnering with charity Depaul UK to help give homeless people a better future, the three new 150g pots with a unique yogurt sleeve come in vibrant flavours – Mango & Turmeric, Rose & Rhubarb and Chocolate & Orange Marmalade. They are the perfect answer to a consumer need for a smaller pot Greek style range which ticks all the boxes in terms of provenance, natural ingredients, healthy indulgence and convenience. All made with fresh British milk and cream using on-trend spices and flavours first shipped into London's docks.
sales@timsdairy.co.uk



Walkers Nonsuch

The deliciously creamy Selection Hammer Pack is great for giving and perfect for sharing. Made by family toffee maker Walker's Nonsuch, the quality is second to none. Ingredients include whole milk and butter, and not forgetting 125 years of cooking experience since the business's humble beginnings in 1894.

The pack includes four big bars in favourite varieties like Original Creamy, Roasted Hazelnut, Liquorice and Fruit & Nut along with a real toffee hammer and instructions on how to break each bar.

In typical gifting colours of red, gold and cream, the attractive pack stands out on any display and brings a point of difference. It's a fun gift with a novelty appeal with the hammer. There's nothing quite like breaking your own toffee. Packs retail from just £6.

walkers-nonsuch.co.uk

Yugo

Our highly charged spiced pastes and sauces take the predictable monotony out of lacklustre home-cooking, providing simple, stress-free cooking experiences for those adventurous foodie souls who currently lack the time, know-how or culinary conviction to truly express themselves in the kitchen.

Once upon-a-time 'fusion cooking' was a horribly shallow and pretentious phrase, and yet in these more open-minded World Cuisine times, Yugo provides the perfect risk-free excuse to freestyle with a number of sublime yet unfamiliar ingredient marriages that ripple with flavour intensity and gastronomic depth.

Our first batch of 'anything but predictable' flavour unions includes two game-changing pastes (Miso Chipotle and Curried Sun-Dried Tomato) and one lively Chipotle Garni hot sauce. Each and every one of our 'fundamentally foolproof' recipes is reassuringly free from preservatives, sodium or any unduly pretentious or obscure ingredients, opting instead for a tantalizing kaleidoscope of reassuringly recognizable yet tantalizingly tasty ingredients.

yugospice.com



field fare

field fare's new range of freshly-frozen, filled pasta is made by a family business in Liguaria, Italy. Their small team of artisans only make pasta and have been doing so for three generations. Using ancient recipes, regional ingredients and traditional flavours, they have made this authentic, delicious tasting pasta that is frozen immediately, retaining its shape, flavours and quality.

Varieties include creamy Blue Cheese and Walnut Saccottini, Classic Meat and Red Wine Ravioli, aromatic Mortadella Sausage and Cheese Ravioli and vegetarian Vegetable and Ricotta Ravioli. All the quality of fresh pasta but with the added convenience of being frozen.

01732 864 344

enquiries@field-fare.com

field-fare.com



Old Rectory Preserves

Old Rectory Preserves is an artisan maker of a range of multi-award-winning jams, chutneys, jellies and marmalade based in Norfolk. They use only top quality, locally sourced ingredients including heritage fruit varieties and herbs, their delicious products picked up a further six Great Taste Awards in the last year. A new range of has been launched using vegetables and foraged fruits grown on the renowned Elveden Estate in Norfolk, including Elderflower Jelly, Piccalilli, Red Onion Relish and Hedgerow Preserve.

01953 789 910

aa@oldrectorypreserves.com

oldrectorypreserves.com



Thai Taste

Thai Taste was launched in 2000 by a team of foodies who were passionate about the delicious, yet quite simple, dishes of Thailand. Working with Thai chefs, they created a complete range of authentic products, made in Thailand with fresh ingredients, that would enable both novices and professionals to prepare delicious Thai meals in the comfort of their own homes.

Now owned by Empire Bespoke Foods, the brand continues to support Duang Prateep Foundation, with a percentage of every sale donated to the cause.

Founded and located in the slums of Bangkok in 1978 by ambitious slum-dweller Prateep Hata, Duang Prateep, meaning 'Flame of Hope', delivers education, happiness and hope to those in need.

This year, Thai Taste is harnessing the power of social media to communicate and engage directly with its community of Thai cooks. The brand has nearly 27,000 followers across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter and is investing in these channels to share recipes, cooking tips and insights on Thai culture and cuisine.

0208 537 4080

thaitaste@empirebespokefoods.com

thaitaste.co.uk



Myfoodie

MYFOODIE is a new range of organic, plant-based 'drinkable snacks' from Swedish start-up 'Veg of Lund' – a joint venture with the University of Lund, Sweden. Working together we discovered a unique new way to develop dairy-free products without losing that dairy feel when you drink it. 'MYFOODIE' shows the on-trend zesty Nordic drinks at their best with three flavours: Raspberry, Blueberry and Sea Buckthorn (a Viking staple!). The range is all organic, plant-based and allergen-free, and one bottle contains nearly 50% of your daily recommended Omega 3 intake. The range launches in April 2019 across London and the South East with more new flavours to come.

vegoflund.com

Hawkshead Relish

Hawkshead Relish is a Worcester Sauce that is gluten-free, vegetarian, nut-free and is suitable for vegans. This tangy and rich sauce is packed with flavour from tamarind, garlic and treacle.

For best use, try this over cheese on toast, rarebit and is equally good used as an ingredient in cooking bolognese, soups and sauces.

The Hawkshead Relish Company is an artisan producer of an award-winning range of over 100 handmade preserves.

All products are free from nuts, gluten and are suitable for vegetarians.

This small family run business has over 60 great taste awards to their name and as a result have become well known within the industry as a producer of optimum quality products.

01539 436 614

info@hawksheadrelish.com

hawksheadrelish.com



Island Bakery

Offer your customers Island Bakery's range of all-butter organic biscuits from the Isle of Mull in the Hebrides. The biscuits are baked in a unique oven, fuelled by local and sustainable sources of wood, and all the electricity for the bakery is generated from the island's plentiful supplies of rain and wind.

The fun packaging tells the story of the island and its characters, presided over by the much-admired highland cow, MacMoo!

Luckily the biscuits can be found beyond the island's shores.

Joe and Dawn Reade would encourage stockists to get in touch so they can be included on the stockist database on the Island Bakery website, which helps biscuit-seekers to find stockists near them.

01688 302 223 info@islandbakery.co.uk

islandbakery.co.uk

The Raw Chocolate Pie Company.

Based in Cornwall, it seemed natural to us to extend our range beyond our Raw Chocolate Pie into Raw Vegan Fudge. We make six flavours of vegan fudge and two Raw Combo bars, combining our Raw Chocolate and Raw Fudge. They are proving very popular and our Salted Caramel Fudge was awarded Silver at the 2018 Free From Awards.

All the ingredients in our raw chocolate and fudge are organic and Fairtrade and we aim for the highest quality. As well as dairy-free, our products are gluten-free, soya-free and contain no added refined sugar. Our aim is always to produce a product of integrity, lovingly handmade in Cornwall.

rawhocpie@gmail.com

rawhocpie.co.uk





Wilkin & Sons

For over a century Wilkin & Sons have been producing jams, preserves and condiments on their fruit farm based in Tiptree, Essex, and the iconic brand has now turned its hand to infused gins and vodkas inspired by their popular range of jarred products. The range includes classic fruit flavours such as English Damson Fruit Liqueur and English Rhubarb Fruit Liqueur, as well as treats for modern palates such as Chocolate Orange Vodka Liqueur and Salted Caramel Vodka Liqueur.

The classic English Strawberry fruit liqueur offers bright, clean strawberry notes with a crisp background of juniper. It can be served straight over ice, added to their favourite mixer for a fruity gin spritzer, or added to prosecco for a strawberry royale.

tiptree.com

Play in Choc

PLAYin CHOC is a new and innovative, ethical, design-led UK manufacturer of organic chocolates and educational eco toys.

We use no plastic in our packaging or toys, instead using home compostable film to individually wrap our 2018 Great Taste Award-winning chocolates.

Our 3D puzzle toys are made from 100% recycled card and there are 46 animal designs to collect, assemble and learn about.

Each PLAYin CHOC kids cube comes with 2 x 10g smooth and creamy chocolates – which are also vegan, refined sugar-free, gluten and soy-free – a 3D puzzle toy (leaving three stencils once assembled), and a fun facts info card.

PLAYin CHOC chocolate only comes in boxes of 5 and 10 – are perfectly sized for portion control, freshness and portability. All products come in shelf-ready packs with pop up displays at the back to neatly inform and sell in any retail environment.

PLAYin CHOC is shortly available from two UK national distributors, The Health Store and Suma. playinchoc.com



Ethical Addictions

Farm direct coffee company, Ethical Addictions, bases itself on two basic tenants: "Taste the difference. Make a difference." With a broad range of different blends, every bean is sourced fairly. By sourcing directly from the producer whenever possible, Ethical Addictions has built long-term relationships with these farms and villages, paying more than 'fair trade' prices and investing in their lives through social projects and partnerships with charities.

The coffee sourced is high-grade Arabica beans, roasted under the watchful eye of a roasting specialist with 30 years experience eacoffee.co.uk

Original Biscuit Bakers

Biscuit specialists Original Biscuit Bakers have launched Mini Gingerbread Men into the UK market.

The bite-sized novelty gingerbread jacks are handcrafted to a traditional gingerbread recipe and wrapped in clear cellophane wrappers to make them a fun product which consumers of all ages are sure to find attractive.

Gemma Williams, product development manager said, "Our mini gingerbread men are the ideal bite-sized snack for those on-the-go, superb as a little treat and make the ideal accompaniment to a cup of tea, coffee or hot chocolate."

originalbiscuitbakers.co.uk



Original Ferrari Coffee

Gian Carlo Ferrari, the master coffee connoisseur has by using his knowledge and experience of over 35 years created a range of full bodied aromatic coffees.

With only the finest beans, sourced from the best plantations, roasted in a special way, could the taste of the world be held in a cup of coffee.

originalferrarioffee.co.uk

Roka Cheese Crispies

Famous since 1949 for intensely flavoured, delicate cheese biscuits with 30% mature cheese. These original ROKA Cheese Crispies are made with mature Gouda cheese, and each biscuit has over 90 layers, resulting in a delicious, crispy and light bite. The ROKA Cheese Crispies Gouda cheese got a 2017 Great Taste award for their outstanding quality, crispiness and taste. Besides this Gouda cheese variety, ROKA has a full range of different flavours and formats.

01604 821 200
info@cheesecrispies.com
cheesecrispies.com



Divine

A new temptingly rich high cocoa dark chocolate range bursting with feelgood flavours, made with specially sourced organic cocoa from tropical São Tomé.

The smooth, rich cocoa from São Tomé delivers a deliciously distinctive depth of flavour with woody, spicy notes, perfectly paired with a range of intriguing feel good flavour combinations. Discover the exciting mix of warming ginger and aromatic turmeric, the delicious duo of real blueberry and popped quinoa, crunchy cocoa nibs, refreshing zesty lemon, combined with rich 85% cocoa, and the exceptionally rich and pure 95% cocoa bar.

0207 378 6550
sales@divinechocolate.com
divinechocolate.com



Gruyère AOP

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

Gruyère AOP can be found with different maturities: the Classic is matured for six months and has a delicate, nutty, creamy flavour. The Reserve is matured for 10 months and has a drier, more grainy mouthfeel. Then you can find an older Gruyère AOP, 14 months or more, giving it a much stronger flavour. The age brings a difference in taste, but the recipe always stays the same.

gruyere.com



Give your customers' afternoon tea spreads a boost with our pick of the best teatime treats

1 THE HANDMADE CAKE COMPANY CAKES

Deliciously homemade-looking and designed to be defrosted fresh for your needs, The Handmade Cake Company's range of cakes is second to none and includes such classics as traditional Fruit Loaf, Flavourful Blackcurrant Mini Cakes and zesty Orange & Poppy Seed Cake.

handmadecake.co.uk



2 REVOLUTION TEA

A range of whole leaf speciality teas made with select herbs, real fruit pieces, essential oils and all natural flavours. Revolution offer high quality, loose leaf tea in convenient infuser tea bags, providing customers with superior taste and health benefits. Available in 19 flavours and three serving formats.

revolutiontea.co.uk



3 TREWITHEN DAIRY CLOTTED CREAM

Dairy farmers Rachel and Bill Clarke began processing milk and cream more than 20 years ago. Now joined by sons Francis and George and a dedicated staff of 150, the 'Trewithen family' produce delicious milk, cream, butter and yoghurt using milk from herds within 25 miles of their dairy in the beautiful Glynn Valley, Cornwall.

trewithendairy.co.uk





4 TIPTREE COCKTAIL CONSERVES

New Tiptree Cocktail Conserves add a special twist to your scones. They are also terrific on toast, or mix with your favourite cocktail for a little extra pizzazz. Available in five varieties: Berry Daiquiri, Buck's Fizz, Lime Mojito, Peach Bellini and Piña Colada.
tiptree.com



5 MR ORGANIC BISCUITS

Deliciously crunchy Mr Organic Biscuits are baked to perfection. They are crafted to a plant-based recipe, using only the finest organic ingredients and absolutely no palm oil. From store cupboard staples to speciality goods, Mr Organic is making it simple to choose a better, more wholesome way of living.
mr-organic.com



6 THE HANDMADE CAKE COMPANY SULTANA SCONES

Delivered in loose boxes of 18, The Handmade Cake Company's Sultana Scones are a delicious addition to an afternoon tea spread. The classic, buttery scone has been updated with the addition of juicy and flavourful sultanas – making them delicious eaten with jam and cream or even simply good quality butter.
handmadecake.co.uk



7 NYETIMBER CLASSIC CUVÉE

This wine's fine and elegant bubbles with a palate of honey, pastry, almond and baked apple flavours make it a delicious partner for afternoon tea treats. Nyetimber's Classic Cuvée also stands up to savoury pairings such as sandwiches thanks to its toasty and complex aromas which come from over three years in the cellar.
nyetimber.com





THE NEW ETHICS

Ethical concerns are driving consumer demand like never before, so what does it take to meet your customers' expectations?

Anticipating purchase behaviour – the holy grail of retail – is all about understanding those micro-factors that will sway a shopper at important crossroads. As they hesitate on the threshold of a shop, as their hand reaches for a shelf, as they hover the

product over their basket. According to market stats released last month by analysts Nielsen, working hard on the sustainability of your range and the ethics of your shop's outlook may nudge customers over the line. Around 73% of global consumers polled said they'd probably change

their purchase decision to reduce their impact on the environment. Significant proportions reported buying habits in favour of organic (41%), products made with sustainable materials (38%) or which otherwise delivered on social responsibility claims (30%).

"Sustainability is a way to show consumers that you listen to them, care for their needs and are thoughtful about how you produce their products," said Crystal Barnes, Nielsen's vice president of global responsibility and sustainability. "With the right messaging sustainability can represent premium indicators such as quality, superior function, uniqueness, and are often tied to the 'go-local' movement." So what does ethical, sustainable or responsible mean to your customers? And just how far should you go to meet their expectations?

Fairtrade

According to Sophi Tranchell, CEO of Fairtrade chocolate brand Divine, the increasingly 'woke' generation of consumers is thanks in no small part to the activities of organisations like her own. "It

hasn't come from nowhere," she suggests. "There's a digitally-literate generation that has access to social media – that can discover and share information more easily than ever and lobby corporations through that mechanism – but I feel there's been fantastic quality educational material produced by us, by Comic Relief, by the Fairtrade Foundation, and Oxfam that's been in schools for 20 years. And the things you learn in school are a matter of fact, which might explain why, despite the proliferation of marks and claims, Fairtrade still stands out as the one that ensures farmers get a better price for their cocoa."

Sophi is referring, of course, to several big brands who have flown the Fairtrade family to set up their own stewardship schemes. Cadbury and Green and Black's – both owned by Mondelez International – have moved to the latter's Cocoa Life scheme. Nestlé started working with Fairtrade in 2009 but launched its own Cocoa Plan scheme in 2013. "We think third-party verification is very important," says Sophi, carefully. "It's important that there's an independent check on claims. If there's no independent verification on a scheme then it's like

they're marking their own homework. The other thing that's distinct about Fairtrade is that it's in the hands of the farmers: the board is 50% farmers, and a guaranteed minimum price that puts the money to the farmers, so they decide how they spend it."

"Consumers are definitely looking for more meaning in their products," agrees Catherine Thompson, head of innovation at the Fairtrade Foundation. "Through our advocacy work we've helped bring about a new generation of ethical consumers, and we definitely see a surge in ethically-conscious consumerism. I think there's a deepening need among people to have an emotional connection [with their purchases], so we're working to bring forward the authentic farmers' voices." For Catherine, the familiarity of the Foundation's mark is a crucial part of its ability to cut through the 'noise' around sustainability. According to figures from the Foundation, 93% of UK shoppers recognise the logo and 83% trust it when deciding if a product is ethical. It's hoped that Fairtrade, a transparency platform being rolled out to all products by next year, will help consumers and retailers alike learn more about

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“ We would rather be mindful of our environmental impact than wholly focused on the full price value of our products. We believe that this in turn is important to our customer, and so works really well for our brand ”



experience, we do the hard work for our customers when it comes to looking after our planet.”

According to Tom Pell and Jeanette Wong, who opened The Clean Kilo, what claims to be the UK's largest zero waste supermarket in Digbeth, Birmingham, last June, the movement's time has come. “In 2018 it completely rocketed,” says Jeanette. “There must be over 40 now. I'm on a Facebook group that encourages people to set up zero waste shops and there are more than 2,000 members now. If this becomes the norm, and there are zero waste shops in every town, this is going to become the norm and people will have their zero waste kit – all their containers, all their bags – ready.”

That this shop flourishes in a borough described as the Shoreditch

In fact the small shop's student nights are so popular that Jeanette and Tom have heard of the limited free 'tickets' booked on Eventbrite swapping hands for cash amongst customers.

Of course it's not just plastic waste that grabs shopper's attention; cutting food waste, and being seen to support food banks, is another strand to ethical retailing. “We've never produced a huge surplus of food as wastage has always been something we have cared about,” says Harriet Jenkins, COO of Detox Kitchen, which has two delis in central London. “However we used to have to throw out our dressed display salads at the end of the day, as well as our egg wraps, as they're best served absolutely fresh.”

Instead Detox Kitchen has recently started using a waste reselling app from Swedish start-up Karma app to

“ Millennials are an increasingly influential and socially-responsible demographic, so it surely makes sense that retailers should shift their business ethics more in line with this key market ”

the supply chain of crops grown in markets where farmers and workers are vulnerable to exploitation.

Zero waste

According to market analysts Mintel, plastic waste – and in particular single-use packaging – is the top environmental concern for consumers, with plastic-free stores emerging as the number one ethical priority of consumers in a recent research from Mintel. ‘Naked’ shops may soon become commonplace on the high-street: this month cosmetics brand Lush opens its first UK

packaging-free shop in Manchester after successful trials in Berlin and Milan. The fine food sector is already embracing the trend; Scotland's first plastic-free grocery – The Refillery – opened its doors in mid-January, joining Bulk Food Market in East London and Earth. Food. Love in Totnes among others. “I'm excited to be joining the ranks of revolutionary businesses who are offering something radically different to combat our global waste issue,” said The Refillery founder Kelly Wright on the store's launch. “By offering a streamlined, ethical shopping

of Birmingham may not win over zero waste skeptics to the model's viability, but according to Jeanette the shop has become a destination for shoppers from less posh neighbourhoods. “Our customer base is really varied,” says Jeanette. “Young people come in who have seen us on Instagram, students – some of our products are cheaper than the supermarkets...Our spices are so much cheaper because we're selling them without the glass jar. A lot of mums and their children come in during the week and elderly people too. All generations are actively trying to reduce their plastic consumption.”

discount unsold food to a motivated group of consumers, thus reducing food waste and getting some cash back. “It has absolutely worked from a financial perspective,” says Harriet. “Not only does the food that would otherwise be wastage go to good use but we are also able to ensure we are not making a loss from this food.” More important to the brand, however, is the ethical halo that reducing food waste gives to the business. “We would rather be mindful of our environmental impact than wholly focused on the full price value of our products,” says Harriet. “We believe that this in turn is important to our customer, and so works really well for our brand. We have been working a lot on our social responsibility throughout the last year, and our collaboration with Karma has been a part of that. We hope to always be seen as an ethical brand as this is really important to our staff, our brand and our customers alike.”

Modern slavery

“Ethical behaviours are now part of building a brand in the long term, increasing trust with consumers and prolonging brand loyalty,” says Daniel Ball, co-founder of digital procurement platform Wax Digital. “Millennials are an increasingly influential and socially-responsible demographic, so it surely makes sense that retailers should shift their business ethics more in line with this key market.” Daniel believes that all retailers should proof their supply chain against the especially toxic issues of modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking. “It might sound surprising, but these crimes happen frequently in the supply chain, unbeknownst to many,” he suggests. “Sugar farming is a particularly hazardous form of labour, with low life expectancies, wages and job security across the board, as well as occupational dangers in abundance too.”

It's only businesses with a turnover of £36m that are obliged to comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which makes large businesses responsible for checking that suppliers don't benefit from slave labour. So does this mean smaller, independent retailers can cross the issue off their to-do list? “Yes and no, really,” says Daniel. “They can still choose to voluntarily produce a ‘slavery and human trafficking statement’, especially if they're working with suppliers. In fact, many independent retailers often take a strong stance on their approach to slavery and human trafficking as part of their wider ethical code of conduct.”

“Due to their smaller operational size, independent retailers can go above and beyond the compliance standards set out by the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Not only does this help them to operate and trade more ethically, it can make them a more attractive option for customers. It, therefore, makes a huge amount of sense for small retailers to extensively research all their suppliers and partners to ensure their entire operation is ethically sound.”

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PETER'S YARD



SAMPLING:

Why, how and how not to do it

Why sample?

Arguably, sampling is one of the most important elements of independent retail. It's something which differentiates indies from the multiples in terms of customer service and experience, and allows the knowledgeable cheesemonger to share their expertise and have their customer thoroughly experience the product. Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy says that sampling is a key element to his business: "When we ask what people like most about our business, and why they come back, sampling comes out on top as the most frequently mentioned point." For Neal's Yard Dairy, says director David Lockwood, tasting and sharing is "fundamental". "We sell on flavour," he says, "and to be successful we need customers to buy the right cheese for them, take it home, eat it and feel the need to come back to NYD for more. We want people buying the cheeses that they feel

taste best, not what we want to push. This will build regular customers and they learn to trust us to offer what we think is best at the moment."

Cheese tastings have always been fundamental to the running of Neal's Yard Dairy. "We worked to improve the cheeses that were made through soliciting feedback from customers," explains David. "Randolph quickly learned that there was quite a lot of variation from batch to batch as well as within the batch itself. The staff needed to constantly taste the cheese and have customers taste

the cheese too. NYD got direct feedback about the cheese and the staff could direct customers to the cheeses they liked best."

"Over time other benefits were seen. First and foremost, when people walk in the shop to look around and don't want to engage with staff, we can simply provide a taste without speaking. It's on the knife before asking if the person is interested. No pressure. We are sharing something delicious and not worrying about making a sale."

For little-known cheses, sampling is integral to their success. For Jumi, a London-based retailer

“When we share our cheese without too much concern about making the immediate sale we allow our customers the time and space to relax and taste the cheese. Then it becomes irresistible”

of Swiss cheese, sampling is "fundamental so that our customers can get to know our products," says Marcello Basini, director. "Only by tasting the cheese," he says, "can you differentiate an artisanal product from a mass-produced one."

How to do it

Andy advises that cheesemongers talk about the product at the same time as they're handing out the sample - "interact with them," he says. Staff training is key, explains David: "We train our team to say what they think about the cheese offered rather than asking the customer what they think of the cheese. It's not nice to be put on the spot by an expert." This training can help in developing skills to help gauge what the customer really wants, even if they don't have the knowledge to ask for that outright. "We use the sampling process to get to the cheese that the customer actually wants," says David. "They may come in asking for a mild Cheddar and leave with a Stilton based on the feedback they provide the person serving them." This understanding can be helpful to the wider business, too; at Neal's Yard Dairy, information from customer samplings is fed back to producers and the in-house maturing team.

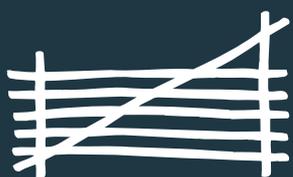
How not to do it

"You have to be careful not to sample passively," says Andy. "Just putting out lumps of cheese that people can graze on as they pass without any interaction will tip the balance into being more about people just grabbing and eating and less about them sampling and thinking about what they are tasting." In percentage terms, Andy states that around 25% of the time samples do not lead to a sale, but it's important to not let that be the end of it - simply offer them a sample of something else as a comparison, and use it "as an introduction to talk to the customer about what you do and your cheeses."

Personally," says Marcello, "I don't like the way some business sample cheese, just throwing it on a board and feeding it to a more or less engaged public - sampling should always be personal and unique." Don't think that customer service and experience will automatically lead to a sale, though; "A poor product won't go anywhere even with the best communication," he continues.

What about the cost?

"While sampling can be time consuming and may not lead to a sale at the moment, we believe that it builds the value of our brand," says David. "While sampling can be time consuming and may not lead to a sale at the moment, we believe that it builds the value of our brand." In terms of shoppers who are happy to taste cheese with little intention of purchasing it, David says that it's "unusual. Very occasionally we will have people graze, and if we are sampling outside the shop our conversion rate will be low, but the activity will draw people to us." Also, David states that mongering skills are key, as poor skills can lead to unsellable waste - a potentially sizeable cost of offering samples.



PETER'S YARD

The natural
choice for
cheese



MICHAEL SMALES LYBURN CHEESE

“Natural evolution”

With the Milk Marketing Board dissolved in 1994, and struggling to sell vegetables to both supermarkets and the wholesale market, it became clear that for smaller players like ourselves to survive we needed to be producing a niche product and it needed to be branded. As a result, we changed from growing conventional vegetables to growing organic and started to experiment with cheese made with our own cows milk.

So it was in 1952, Father was given three cows from Lord Carnarvon, Faith, Hope and Beatrix, and he started with 50 acres. In 1969 we rented Lyburn Farm, another 270 acres, in the

New Forest on the Hampshire/Wiltshire border and a dairy unit for 200 cows was constructed. The soil type was a medium sandy loam, so there was clearly an opportunity to grow other crops and, to cut a long story short, today we now have 170 cows, make 70 tons of cheese a year, grow about 80 acres of organic vegetables and 30 acres of pumpkins, and farm in the region of 500 acres with a full time staff of eight and lot of seasonal staff.

Hampshire Farmers Markets had just started in 1999. This gave us the confidence that we would at least have somewhere to sell the cheese, and without them we may never have survived. You look at the counter in any supermarket, any good farm shop or deli and the choice is bewildering, so we had

to decide what style of cheese we should make and we came up with three criteria.

1. We were not going to make Cheddar. The world makes Cheddar, so avoid it.
2. Don't be too niche. You do need a broad appeal; a really punchy blue cheese is not everyone's cup of tea.
3. Don't age the cheese for too long.

Cash is king, you need cash flow. That said we have now, to a degree, broken this rule, you never get everything right! So we played around for a while and started to settle with a Gouda recipe, not typically Gouda, but it was a starting point. The customers at Winchester Farmers Market seemed to like it, so that was good enough.

We needed a brand name, and it had to be Lyburn. This is actually a Scottish name and means borne by the river. As a combination of letters it is simple, not too long, unique, so will not get mixed up with any other name. So it had to be simple and easy, and when we came to naming Winchester, the nine month cheese, given we had started at Winchester FM that was easy

too – the old Capital of England had to be right. Then when we took it on to 18 months of age, it had to be Old Winchester. Stoney Cross was not so easy, for a while this cheese went unnamed. We had lists of names, bits of paper, sat around the table with cups of tea, all to no avail. But there it was, sat right on the doorstep two miles up the road, as I cross the old airfield of the Second World War to deliver cheese to the Royal Oak pub at Fritham.

Our cows are an integral part of the story. We have bred them to produce more fat and protein; at 5am the milk is in the cow, and by lunchtime it is cheese. In 2001 we built a new production facility, with the help of some grant money, and over the years we have slowly grown the business to the point where we make about a ton and a half a week and seven variations of the cheese, but Old Winchester has been the star of the show. Being 18 months old these 5kg wheels are full of flavour, very hard, and almost look like Parmesan. Being made with vegetarian rennet, it gives chefs the opportunity to use an English cheese instead of a hard Italian, and for them it ticks the vegetarian box as well.

“With the Milk Marketing Board dissolved in 1994, and struggling to sell vegetables to both supermarkets and the wholesale market, it became clear that for smaller players like ourselves to survive we needed to be producing a niche product”



ROSE GRIMOND NETTLEBED CREAMERY

“Curiosity led us to kefir”

Someone once said that cheesemakers are farmers of microbes, and the more cheese we make at Nettlebed Creamery, the more curious about them we become.

We make three different types of cheese: a soft, a semi-soft and a semi-hard. Each has its own particular relationship with bacteria. Bix and Highmoor, our soft cheeses, are made with mesophilic bacteria. A mesophile is a lover of moderate temperatures, between around 25-37°C.

St Bartholomew, our semi-hard cheese, is made to a recipe where the curds are “scalded”. Mesophilic bacteria start the acidification and double in numbers every 30-40 minutes through the initial phases of the make before we heat the curds during the stirring

phase to a punchy 45°C. Once the temperature gets in to the forties the mesophiles will slow their growth and then release flavour creating enzymes as the thermophiles take up the strain. Thermophiles, as the name suggest, are lovers of higher temperatures.

That however is only the beginning of our quest to understand microbes. From day one at the Nettlebed Creamery, we were dedicated to the raw milk cause, but the march of bovine tuberculosis across England meant that we had to concede defeat to M. Louis Pasteur. Having been in a low-risk area in south Oxfordshire we had a positive test result for TB. Determined not to say goodbye to all the microflora that our organic farm so liberally gave us, we have started to retro-cultivate the lactic acid bacteria that we know are abundant in our raw milk. Only a very small proportion of the

organisms we find in our raw milk (that are likely strain-specific to our cows, our pasture, our soil and our fields) are even potential pathogens – the rest are flavour-generating friendly bacteria, yeast and moulds that are particular to our organic farm. After looking down the microscope at an ever-changing seasonal cycle of different microorganisms growing on agar plates in our lab our microbial milk quest inevitably led us to kefir.

Our head cheesemaker and microbe guru Patrick had been making kefir at home for years but getting it market ready was a new challenge. We wanted to offer an organic kefir which wasn't mass produced but was of the highest quality and so we set about propagating kefir grains with our own milk and testing, tasting, testing, tasting.

Kefir is one of the oldest forms of fermented milk you can find in Europe. It is believed to have originated in the Caucasus mountains millennia ago. The health benefits of kefir are not fully understood, however, what research has been done seems to indicate that a healthy population of microbes in the gut is associated with an optimally functioning immune system, reduced inflammation and allergies, reduced digestive problems,

improved mental health and a plethora of other somatic and psychological benefits. As a Polish friend recently told me, it is also a great tonic for a hangover. Of all the fermented foods, probiotics and microbial supplements tested, kefir appears to be one of the very few that can actually deliver beneficial microbes that survive the journey to the gut where they prosper. It is possible that the low pH of kefir means that the beneficial microflora have evolved to withstand the acidic environment in the digestive tract.

We have found that since launching our own kefir there are very stark differences between what we bottle and what can be bought in a supermarket. For starters, the viscosity is quite different. Ours is thick and leaves “legs” down the side of a glass. The supermarket varieties that we have tried are smooth and leave no trails. They remind us of Yop, a liquid yoghurt that used to be available in the 80s and 90s. But we are artisan cheesemakers and quite used to the differences between supermarket produce and what we do. Fortunately, we know that there are consumers out there who are discerning and also on a microbial quest.

Talk Cheese

New retail perspectives from industry experts

News, opinion and comment from dairy insiders

Ethical Bluebell bags 'Best Product Award'

Bluebell, a semi-soft blue from Galloway's The Ethical Dairy, has won Best Product Award in the chilled and frozen category at Scotland's Speciality Food Show. Judged by a panel of industry experts including *MasterChef* winner Gary Maclean, the award was welcomed by dairy director Wilma Finlay. "We have been thrilled by the response to Bluebell,"

she commented. "The feedback from members of the public has been phenomenal and to receive an award like this from the industry is just amazing. Due to our current production capacities we have only been selling this cheese direct through our online shop, and even then we have been struggling to keep up with demand for it. We are very much looking forward to

upscaling production in the next few months and launching this cheese into the retail trade very soon."

Bluebell was launched last autumn, the fifth cheese from The Ethical Dairy made using 'cow with calf' milk that allows young to suckle their mothers rather than being separated from them shortly after birth.



CHEESE FACT FILE: ST CERA

- **Country of origin:** UK
- **Region:** Suffolk
- **Milk:** Cow's
- **By:** Julie Cheyney, White Wood Dairy
- **Interesting fact:** St Cera is the sister cheese of St Jude, and is made using the milk from the dairy cows from Fen Farm Dairy – the home of Baron Bigod
- **Tasting notes:** Pungent and creamy with a spoonable texture



Wyke Farms to double production

Somerset Cheddar giant Wyke Farms has been granted planning permission to expand its Bruton dairy in a move that's set to double its production capacity. Citing the export expansion opportunities presented by Brexit, Wyke Farms is embarking on the eight-year redevelopment project to increase turnover despite 'a very challenging retail environment'. The cheesemaker reportedly grew turnover by 26% to £85m in the 12 months up to March 2018. Wyke Farms currently trades with more than 160 countries, selling more than 15,000 tonnes of cheese each year.



NEAL'S YARD DAIRY

Vandersterre launches new Gouda

Dutch dairy Vandersterre has launched a new cheese in the Gouda market. Landana Jersey Gouda Old is made with whole Jersey milk to the original Landana recipe, but is matured for at least a year on wooden shelves. The finished cheese is rich and creamy, with fine crystals a sign of its long maturation. Jersey Old will be available from mid-April, with half-cheese weighing around 5.5 kg available.



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Errington staff return to jobs

Two long-term cheese makers who were laid off amid a legal battle with South Lanarkshire Council have returned to their jobs. Head cheesemaker Angela Cairns and colleague Paul McAllister have returned to the dairy at Errington Cheese, the

latest development in a two-year drama that has also seen the dairy receive £254,000 compensation money from the council. It's a step forward for the recovering dairy, which won two gold medals and a silver at the World Cheese Awards late last year.



FIRST VEGAN CHEESE AD HITS THE AIRWAVES

Plant-based 'cheese' has racked up another first this month, with an advert for vegan cheesemaker Violife airing on TV. The two ads share the message that vegan cheese can integrate into mainstream diets and is no longer the preserve of specific social tribes.

CELEBRITY BACTERIA CHEESE GOES ON SHOW

Cheeses created using the bacteria of unnamed celebrities will go on show at the V&A later this year, in a new exhibition pondering the future of food. Artists Christina Agapakis and Sissel Tolaas have created the cheeses for Food: Bigger Than The Plate which opens at the Kensington museum in May.

DAIRIES TARGETED BY ACTIVISTS

Thousands of British dairy farmers have been targetted by a vegan activism project that has shared a map of dairy farms, as well as contact details, online. ProjectCalf.com encourages readers to visit farms, speak with farmers and 'dismantle the humane myth'. The action follows similar anti-dairy activism in Australia.

SOFT CONTINENTAL CHEESE HAS SEEN A 6.4% GROWTH IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS

AHDB DAIRY/KANTAR WORLDPANEL

JUSTIN TUNSTALL RETAIL CONSULTANT



"Waxing lyrical"

On a family holiday to Normandy in 1965, my parents and their adult friends were hugely excited by Livarot and Camembert – seldom seen back home in Hampshire. While their sophisticated palates savoured such artisan classics, my young chums and I got addicted to – Babybel. It may have been the inherent sweetness, but I think the activity of unwrapping the cheese, stripping back the red wax to reveal

supple paste was at least 50% of the appeal. Small waxed cheeses don't generally attract the same positive reviews as rind-washed or cloth-wrapped cousins, but from shop owners' perspective, they can be a massive boon. While cutting and wrapping 200gms from a larger truckle can take a couple of minutes, a 200gm waxed cheese takes mere seconds to pop in a bag and present with a flourish. Most shops have Godminster or Snowdonia 200gm waxed cheeses in stock and they have won a place in consumers' hearts, creating strong, recognisable brands in the process.

Large cheeses, such as Parlick Fell or Curworthy, seem to benefit from moisture retained in the paste as a result of the wax exterior, and when cut, the coloured wax makes a pleasing colour contrast when displayed in the counter. Somewhat irritatingly, when cut with a cheese wire, wax finds a way of secreting themselves until the next cut leaving scarlet, burgundy, green or black traces. Diligent cleaning of the wire after each cut is essential!

Waxed cheeses make excellent gifts, and in my small seaside

cheesemonger we sold lots of them to people who might otherwise have taken sticks of rock back home for their friends and neighbours. We did this by branding them as our own, with local place names and "Lyme Regis" blazoned prominently on the top stickers (produced on a printer in the shop, although a more professional look could be achieved via a commercial label firm). We had lots of fun with special editions to celebrate events and got national coverage for some of them – particularly a Royal Wedding duo. Through Ford Farm we acquired flat 900gm black waxed Cheddars on which we placed replica 45rpm record labels, earning us coverage on both BBC Radio 2 and 6 Music. A cricket ball coloured cheese also got us onto Radio 4's *Test Match Special!*

A nearby dairy farm has specialised in creating the innovative Black Cow vodka from the whey by-product of cheese manufacture and a few years ago launched their own black waxed cheese of the same name. This is a brand extension that makes perfect sense and which has captured a lot of attention from chefs, who like pairing it with the vodka as a premium alternative to a predictable cheese board.

I can't generalise about the flavour of waxed cheeses – even the Cheddars – and lovers of a cloth-wrapped Montgomery, Westcombe or Keen's are unlikely to be fans. But waxed cheeses have a legion of followers and it's vital that our staff know more about them than the writing on the label. I believe that cheese counter staff should taste everything that they stock, and waxed cheeses are no exception.

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ARE MARKETS THE FUTURE OF RETAIL?

Opening a store can be an expensive business, especially if you are a young entrepreneur or seeking to experiment with a new concept. Opting for a market stall or pop up shop is proving to be a popular and extremely viable alternative, says Angela Youngman

“We run an expanding programme for young traders which started as a way of encouraging young people to develop a business. Young people are interested in opening market stalls and pop up shops. There is a ground swell of interest,” says Joe Harrison, chief executive of NMTF. “The number of speciality markets is increasing, particularly food markets. There are a lot of discerning customers who want better value, more variety and want to talk to people about food, which is not possible in supermarkets.”

The big advantage for markets and pop up stores is that they are relatively inexpensive. Traders can be flexible with their business concepts, and respond quickly to changes. It is an ideal way to meet potential customers, discuss products, carry out low cost market research and develop sales networks, becoming known to retail buyers in food stores, developing online sales and ultimately leading the way to setting up a permanent store. It is an opportunity which specialist food retailers are increasingly adopting.

It has proved an extremely valuable concept for London based speciality food retailer, Partridges. In 2004, Partridges began holding fine food street markets adjacent to its new premises on the Duke of York Square as a way of driving footfall. Its success has led to similar markets being held near other stores within its network and ultimately elsewhere in London. There are now 10 Shepherds Markets within London including Primrose Hill, Victoria, Chancery Lane and Spitalfields. From the beginning, Partridges set to create a concept that was more than a speciality food market as Partridges managing director John Shepherd explains.

“The Shepherds Markets have been an important initiator of the

street food revolution taking place in London. To make it an original and different market we created the Startisans concept to help new businesses and offer new and interesting products. The key to the scheme is to provide a commercial platform for a good food idea, at a relatively low cost in a good location. It allows producers to interact directly with customers in a high profile location at no great cost. Many have refined packaging and ingredients based on feedback. Some have moved on to export or opened their own premises.”

Lavina Lavolio, owner of an Italian handmade confectionery company, is typical of these new businesses. She began trading at a Shepherds Market where John Partridge spotted the concept and asked to stock her products in Partridges. From that small beginning, Lavolio has grown to supply Fortnum & Mason, Ocado, Amazon and more than 200 premium stockists in the UK, Australia, Hong Kong and Kuwait. Another example is that of The Pished Fish which started selling its booze infused hand-crafted smoked salmon at the Shepherds Food Market in 2015, and is now selling its award-winning smoked salmon to Partridges, Selfridges and Fortnum & Mason among others.

Apart from being a fantastic way to discover new products for Partridges, Shepherd has no doubt as to the extra value the market concept has added to his retail business. “It brings in extra footfall by having a vibrant market on the doorstep every Saturday. The producers themselves bring a lot of energy and marketing skills and promote their own products, which ultimately helps footfall. The Startisans project has won awards and brought kudos to Partridges in many ways. It helps us with differentiation from other shops and shows that we are giving something back to the

local community as a number of the stalls are local businesses. The markets have been very successful innovations around London. It is still a work in progress in that we would like to devote more space to the Startisans in our four shops.”

Customer reactions have been extremely positive, recognizing that the markets provide something new and different along with an opportunity to meet innovative food producers.

Up in Scotland, the Fife-based Bowhouse on the Balcaskie Estate near Edinburgh, is fast becoming a hub for artisan food and drink producers following the introduction of a series of specialist food markets. Although the market was only launched this year, it is generating a lot of interest, with customer attendance reaching up to 6,000 people.

Demand for trading space outstrips supply. By rotating the companies involved on a regular



basis, Bowhouse is ensuring that customers are kept interested and curious about what will be on sale. It offers a way in which small businesses can collaborate, share costs and use Bowhouse as a shop window. Some companies operate units on site, others just take part in the monthly food markets.

Minick the Butcher is one of the companies trading at Bowhouse. It has five shops within Fife, and uses the market as a publicity vehicle as well as acting as a way of experimenting with new products such as dry-aging meat. Stuart Minick comments, “The market has brought fresh blood to the food and drink scene in the area. We enjoy

interacting with people and getting direct customer feedback. We do a lot of sampling of new products and have been able to roll out new products across our stores as a result. We also get customers far more involved than in our traditional stores – we recently ran a sausage making workshop which was a great success.”

Taking on a market stall has enabled Scottish based retailer Coco Tree to tap into a new network of customers, thus expanding their existing customer base.

According to the NMTF’s Mission for Markets, there are currently over 1,100 markets across the UK involving 32,000 traders, plus another 9,000 who trade only at

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THERE ARE CURRENTLY OVER **1,100** MARKETS ACROSS THE UK INVOLVING **32,000** TRADERS, PLUS ANOTHER **9,000** WHO TRADE ONLY AT SPECIAL EVENTS AND FESTIVALS. IN 2017-18, SUCH TRADERS COLLECTIVELY TURNED OVER **£3.1 BILLION** POUNDS, REPRESENTING A STEADY **£200M** INCREASE YEAR ON YEAR SINCE 2012

NMTF'S MISSION FOR MARKETS



special events and festivals. In 2017-18, such traders collectively turned over £3.1 billion pounds, representing a steady £200m increase year on year since 2012. Music festivals and other events such as the Christmas markets and the Great Dorset Steam Festival are becoming increasingly popular ways for young people to enter retailing.

Many such festivals now have waiting lists of traders seeking

trading at festivals can prove extremely profitable, with some traders succeeding in turning over tens of thousands of pounds during an event. Boutique bakery Bad Brownie reports that trading at music festivals now accounts for 15% of their annual revenue. By linking with e-commerce, it enables traders to generate repeat custom and build a reputation, leading to further expansion.

Markets are increasingly being used as a way of revitalizing high streets. In Altrincham, a communal food hall based around innovative street food providing a place where people can come and relax, is linked to an adjacent food market where there are now numerous speciality food retailers including a stall holder selling only Portuguese food. The concept has successfully increased footfall, brought more trade to the

“Having a vibrant market on the doorstep every Saturday brings in extra footfall. The producers themselves bring a lot of energy and marketing skills and promote their own products, which ultimately helps footfall”

area, and encouraged customers to stay longer. The market now turns over £5m a year, and has helped reduce Altrincham's retail vacancy rate from 25% in 2014 to 10% four years later. A key reason for its success is its flexibility, and cost efficient operating systems. Participants are charged a percentage of turnover, thus reducing the risk and encouraging innovation.

Visiting the market is often regarded as an experience for many consumers, especially when it is involved with a special event such as a music festival. Attending the festival becomes more of a recreational break, and visitors are ready to open their wallets. This is highlighted in research undertaken by Barclaycard. Daniel Mathieson, head of sponsorship at Barclaycard, says, “Our data shows that consumers now seek out entertainment above all else when deciding how to spend their money. By providing something extra, whether that's engaging with music fans by being present at their favourite festival or creating pop-up shops in new locations, these brands will be the ones that thrive in an experience-led economy.”

One of the major changes in market operation has been the arrival of night markets with a focus on food. These cater for busy business people who cannot reach markets by day, but want the experience of communal eating with innovative street food as well as buying fresh and specialist produce while enjoying entertainment like art, theatre and

music. Such markets are proving extremely successful in large cities like London.

Pop-up shops are another growth sector as Craig Pannozzo of GazeboShop explains. “Pop-up shops have become more and more popular over the last few years, helping fill otherwise empty spaces in towns and cities. They're a good halfway scale between events and having your own full-time premises as the contracts are temporary, which in turn, equals cheaper rental costs. Our campaign 'Home to High Street' champions speciality food and drink retailers setting up stalls in food markets to increase their exposure and trade up.”

He continued, “There has never been a better time to invest in a pop-up shop, with one recent survey revealing that 42% of consumers now prefer small businesses and independent retailers over larger brands.”

Equally important is the growth of specialist food markets such as the London Borough Market which operate permanent premises and have become a tourist attraction as well as catering for the local community. Other specialist food markets do not have permanent premises but open regularly. The monthly market in Malton also links into the yearly food festival. These markets have tapped into a hitherto unfilled niche by offering consumers access to a very wide spectrum of local food. Their success has encouraged other retailers selling specialist food and drink to open permanent stores within the town.



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ISABELLE PLASSCHAERT

VIEWPOINT: RENEE ELLIOT

The founder of Planet Organic and co-founder of Beluga Bean shares the journey towards a better life and planet

After university – I was an English major and minored in health and nutrition – I came to England to work as a writer on a wine magazine in Twickenham. I sat at my desk on my first day of work, full of excitement, and the guy sitting next to me said “I can’t wait until Friday”. It was Monday morning. At that moment I decided that I really had to love what I do. I’m a passionate person, and I was surprised that nobody had told me throughout my years of school and college that it was possible to design your life; up until then, I realised that you went to university, got a job and that was your future.

When I was 19 I read a book called *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappé; that’s

where my MO of questioning and looking for better began. It was about the meat industry in America and led me to turn vegetarian. It spoke about the horrors of the American meat industry but didn’t say anything about the alternatives, for example organic. It wasn’t something that was widely spoken about in the wine industry, either, but through my work in the wine trade I was flown out to America by the Great American Wine Company – I visited their top wineries, and one in particular blew me away: Bonterra. It was my first experience of organic, which at the time was a wild Californian notion; to walk through the vineyards and see inter-cropping instead of the dead soil between vines that I’d experienced in European vineyards, and enjoy

all of the flowers, plants, bees, butterflies and a huge organic garden, made me feel like I was in the Garden of Eden. It was a hugely powerful experience. I stayed within the vineyard and it felt like such a privilege, to be eating food from the organic garden and experiencing the organic cooking classes they ran. I was in my early twenties and the experience was life changing.

Sadly, organic hasn’t maintained a steady momentum, especially when you compare it to health trends that have really taken off in recent years. I’ve been involved with the Soil Association for a long time and there has always been a challenge in promoting organic farming without denigrating conventional farming. When people who are dismissive or

even angry about organic, and are asked how much they actually know about the details of sometime conventional or organic farming, they realise they don’t know much at all – they’re often simply looking at the higher cost of organic produce and not looking to understand how that is justified. There’s a lack of awareness, and people want to be able to trust that the people in charge are looking after their best interests, but that’s not always the case. We need to educate ourselves, and take responsibility for our own health and wellbeing. The fact is that if you don’t invest in better food now, by buying organic, for example, you will end up spending a lot more money further down the line in terms of costs to the NHS. It’s a complicated argument to get across – buying local or Fairtrade is easy to understand, so we need to continue educating consumers about organic as it’s not a simple concept.

TALKING POINTS

THE SIX PILLARS OF WELLNESS

I looked at what was, and I thought there must be something better. For me, Planet Organic was about wellbeing and food specifically – for me, physical wellbeing is broken into food, exercise and sleep – I see that as the foundation, because if you don’t have physical health you’re not going to reach your potential, however excited you are to live your life. Through my twenties and thirties I thought about what could be better in every area of my life – alternative therapies instead of medicine, how to find joy in your work, relationships and beyond. I was constantly asking myself what I could do better and experience better, and how I could make that happen. Better doesn’t usually mean conventional, and conventional wisdom isn’t always smart. Throughout my time working at Planet Organic, I realised that I had formulated more pillars of wellbeing – as well as physical, occupational, psychological, economic, spiritual and social. My business partner Sam and I launched Beluga Bean to run courses in support of individuals and business and to bring those pillars together. As time goes on I see more people coming into the Beluga Bean family, including businesses and corporates, and we will go on to add more courses and mentors as time goes on.

INSPIRATION

My mission is to promote health in the community. People often ask me if I had a role model or a mentor – the only role model I really had during this journey is Anita Roddick, a successful, values-led, shake-it-up kind of woman. I’m inspired by many of my mentees who are creating values-led business in order to do good. I believe that values-led business is good business – any good business that adds value to people’s lives is inspiring.

THE ORGANIC RETAIL MOVEMENT

When I was 26 years old I visited an organic supermarket in the US and realised that there was a gap in the market for similar ventures in the UK. There were small-scale health food stores and independents, but nobody was doing it in any big way. The health food market was niche – it was quirky and ‘alternative’ rather than mainstream. There was also the issue of it being an exclusive thing; a girlfriend told me that when she went into her local health food shop with her suit, lipstick and pearls, people stared at her. She wanted the best quality food and to feel comfortable

buying it. I found it interesting that while you can buy the best quality handbags from luxurious shops, if you wanted to buy the best quality food the shopping experience didn’t reflect that. The retailers which were already running in the UK didn’t work much with fresh produce, meat and fish – mainly ambient products, pills and potions – as Britain’s health food market grew out of the vegetarian movement. I realised that if I didn’t sell organic meat and fish in Planet Organic, then in effect I would be supporting the conventional meat industry. When I opened Planet Organic in 1995, the philosophy was to sell the best version of everything, and make the concept appealing to all. A few years after we opened, As Nature Intended

went large-format, and I know there are now some big Holland & Barretts around. Fresh & Wild launched shortly after we did and was multi-storey, whereas we were really going for the supermarket on one floor, then Whole Foods Market came over from the US. When we first opened we targeted traditional, hardcore vegans, then we started seeing business people, mums and pregnant women coming in – we could see the demographic widening. Then the supermarkets went strongly into organic. They were following us closely the whole time; for the first few years, if I went onto the shop floor and there was a man in a suit, he was probably from a supermarket. We didn’t allow photography in the store as we were

nervous about our merchandising being copied, but quite regularly we’d have individuals or groups of people in suits, taking photographs and quietly admitting that they were from supermarkets when we asked. One time, we even had a coach load of them arrive! Supermarkets got in on the action in 1999, when GMOs hit the press. They started delisting products that contained GMOs and replacing them with organic products – using a number of the brands we stocked as well as launching their own-label organic lines. This didn’t worry me too much, my goal was an organic planet so we never went for exclusivity – the more successful a brand was, the more shoppers were buying the product, the better.



THE BIG CHILL

With plastic hitting the headlines hard in recent times, we speak to experts in temperature controlled packaging to discover the innovations helping the sector be more sustainable

With eco-friendliness hot topics right now, it's important that all sectors of the food industry play their part in acknowledging the impact their work makes on the planet in order to both maintain the sustainability of their business (and the natural environment) and satisfy eco-conscious consumers. Plastic in particular is hitting the headlines, but as Samantha Barrett from the company explains, "JB Packaging

have been manufacturing boxes since 1982. It started with the fishing industry but today the versatility of the box has grown to serve a wide range of markets including deli, catering, pharmaceutical, aquatic, reptile and more.

"EPS is a proven and reliable packaging material that helps to ensure that many different perishables reach their destination in excellent condition. Its capacity to maintain a stable temperature

helps to reduce wastage of food and guarantees food safety.

"Expanded polystyrene (EPS) is more eco-friendly than most realise; a finished polystyrene box is 98% air so only consists of 2% material, therefore it is very resource efficient." She continues, "EPS also has an Ozone Depletion Potential of zero which means it causes no damage to the ozone layer because no CFCs or HCFCs are used during the manufacturing process. EPS

is inert and does not leach any chemicals so is food contact safe."

For businesses keen to avoid utilising single use plastic items would be interested to know that JB Packaging also offers a range of Expanded Polypropylene (EPP) boxes. "These can be used over and over again and are popular for catering, food delivery and storage," explains Samantha. "These boxes are just like an extra-large lunch box, the only difference being the superior insulation."

"EPS offers superb insulation which ensures that temperature sensitive products are kept cooler for longer during transit. The material is packed with tiny air pockets, and because air is a poor

conductor of heat this minimises heat transfer – therefore keeping goods as hot or as cold as they day they packed. Coupled with this ideal material for shipping food, EPS is extremely resource efficient and can be recycled and even reused in the case of expanded polypropylene boxes."

JB Packaging is conscious of the discussions being held about plastics, but defends the benefits of the versatile material. "There are clear challenges around the single-use plastics debate," she says, "however it is important not to lose sight of the positive role that good, reusable or recyclable plastic packaging can play in protecting products and making supply chains more sustainable."

Alex Pawley, sales and marketing manager at Icertech, talks us through the services provided by the experienced packaging business

Icertech was established in 2005, offering cost effective chilled packaging solutions to food retailers and manufacturers. The solutions are designed for customers to get their perishable items from A to B within a 24-72 hour time frame.

Our product range includes smart and sturdy insulated boxes and our food safe chill gel packs. These components have been designed to be used together for optimum reliability and performance, offering you cost effective, high quality solutions to meet all of your temperature controlled packaging needs.

ONE OF YOUR SERVICES IS CUSTOM PRINTED PACKAGING – HOW DOES THIS DIFFER TO WHAT ELSE IS ON THE MARKET?

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packaging is capable of more than that!

Icertech is a trading division of the well-established Lyan Packaging, and through them we have over 30 years of experience in packaging. This has enabled us to offer custom printing with all the advice and guidance required so you can create a unique and branded solution that not only does the job, but works as an invaluable marketing tool. We can supply bespoke versions of many of our bestselling packaging products and from just 300 sets you can have any size from our Tile-Box or Foil-Box range printed with your logo.

WHY SHOULD BUSINESSES CONSIDER IT AS AN OPTION FOR THEIR PRODUCTS?

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WHAT ARE THE MAIN BENEFITS TO USING CUSTOM PRINTED PACKAGING?

As we have experienced following our own rebrand in 2016, putting effort and thought into your packaging will help your customers feel good about their decision to buy from you, encourage them

to recommend your company to others and position your business as professional and one who pays attention to detail.

WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE FOR ICERTECH - ARE THERE ANY EXCITING PLANS IN THE PIPELINE?

2019 is really going to be about product development as we work to develop a range of sustainable and environmentally friendly products, with the aim of making Icertech the leading supplier of eco-friendly temperature controlled packaging solutions.

“ Putting effort and thought into your packaging will help your customers feel good about their decision to buy from you, encourage them to recommend your company to others and position your business as professional and one who pays attention to detail ”

**“It's recyclable plastic and proud!”
Colin Rowland, general manager at Hydropac, introduces the business's latest launch: the Recycle-Air System**

“Hydropac is one of the UK's highest regarded ice and gel pack manufacturers, specialising in temperature controlled packaging solutions to the food and pharmaceutical industry.

Our latest new product development – the Recycle-Air System – is the recyclable version of 2018's product launch, the Reflective-Air system.

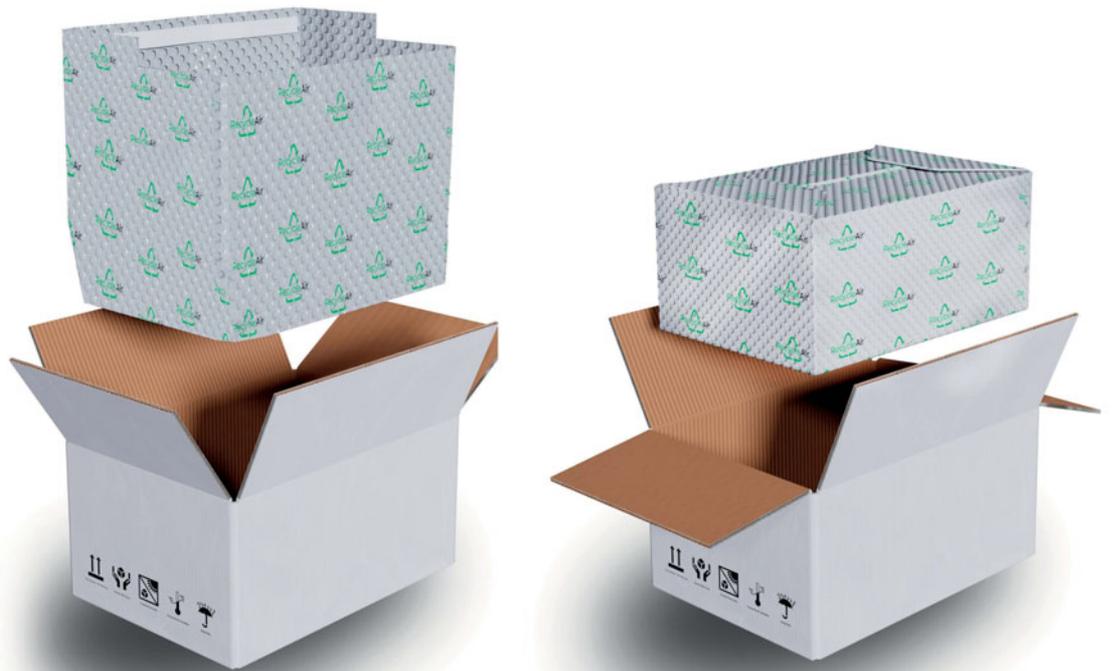
“Recycle-Air offers identical performance characteristics to Reflective-Air, but replacing

the reflective aluminium lining with a recyclable material and keeping the same level of high performance proved a challenge. So, we've doubled up on the insulating and cushioning factor and replaced the aluminium to create a totally recyclable solution, which, when combined with a double strength corrugated outer carton, provides comparable temperature results to its closest competitors: polystyrene and foam-based systems.

“We are continually developing new products and thrashing out new concepts, and dependant not simply on whether they actually perform, but whether they offer the market key benefits and differentiators.

“The new Recycle-Air system – designed and shaped to fit a conventional box, unlike a messy non-gusseted bag – offers a classy looking, no-nonsense, hassle free assembly, without fiddly pieces to find and assemble, further reducing the impact on customers storage and labour, with a pallet-busting 750 liners per pallet potential from our stock sizes.

Hydropac has successfully secured a number of large clients in the UK both in food and



SPOTLIGHT ON: RECYCLING



“Expanded polystyrene boxes often get a bad reputation when they are disposed of irresponsibly. EPS can in fact be fully recycled, and we accept EPS at all our plants for recycling,” says Samantha Barrett of JB Packaging.

“Clean material can be reused in the manufacturing of new EPS boxes and material which is contaminated can be compacted and turned into rigid plastic products such as coat hangers and even wooden fence panel and decking

substitutes. Expanded polypropylene boxes can be recycled and reused. These EPP boxes are popular amongst the catering industry where temperature control for both hot and cold food is important during transit.

“JB Packaging, part of DS Smith is also working with Tesco to recover waste EPS from their waste stream so there are lots of opportunities around.”

“ There are clear challenges around the single-use plastics debate, however it is important not to lose sight of the positive role that good, reusable or recyclable plastic packaging can play in protecting products and make supply chains more sustainable ”

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pharmaceuticals, which have switched from EPS Boxes to the 3D Reflective Air Systems and have found it beneficial in reducing the impact on storage, transport costs, cashflow and weight to landfill, but we wanted to try and add a recyclable version.

“As popular and effective as the Reflective-Air is, in the current

climate we wanted to try and add a recyclable version, and yes that means using plastic!

“The clean and crisp white LDPE is a highly sought-after waste material, with many councils now starting to collect this highly valuable product and waste recyclers bending over backwards to get their hands on it. So, provided as a generation we simply learn to

recycle and educate those around us, then we are doing our bit!

“The system is hard to resist, with classy aesthetics combined with the performance characteristics of both systems, providing a unique and game changing set of differentiators to the current dull, age old systems currently available, providing a more unique, upmarket experience for the end user.”



NEW PRODUCT: ENVIROCOOL

“ Package responsibly, with environmentally cool packaging ”

On 8th March, Hydropac will be launching its newest product: Envirocool.

It is an environmentally-friendly temperature controlled system which “ticks all of the topical environmental boxes,” according to Colin Rowland, general manager at Hydropac.

As well as being biodegradable and recyclable, the new Envirocool system contains some recycled material.

Interested parties can pre-order the new Envirocool on the Hydropac website: hydropac.co.uk

“ We are continually developing new products and thrashing out new concepts, and dependant not simply on whether they actually perform, but whether they offer the market key benefits and differentiators ”

COLIN ROWLAND, GENERAL MANAGER AT HYDROPAC



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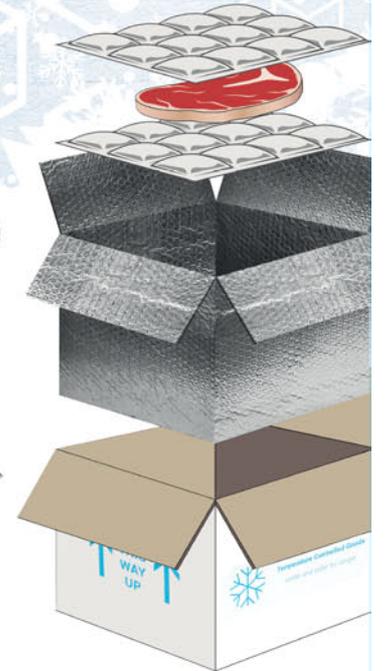
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IN FROM THE COLD

Premium frozen food is performing strongly, but what's forcing shoppers' hands when making a choice at the freezer?

The much maligned TV dinner, grabbed from the freezer cabinet and zapped in the microwave, has long been the target of public health disapproval. High salt, high fat, low fibre and low quality, the freezer meals of yore have long been presented as a last resort for frazzled families who deserve something better. And yet this picture doesn't fit the reality. Market data suggests ready meals are rallying, with high-quality, aspirational convenience meals and ready-to-eat options proving an attractive proposition for time-poor consumers.

"Given that 58% of buyers have bought a ready meal as an alternative to going out for dinner and over a third have eaten them on a special occasion, there is plenty of room in the market for indulgent variants," suggests a recent report from market analysts Mintel. In fact Mintel's analysts forecast a 30% increase in the value of the ready meals and ready to cook market, suggesting that while a chunk of this growth will come from inflation, 'a return to growth for real incomes should encourage trading up'.

On the up

The British Frozen Food Federation is understandably upbeat about the opportunities in this sector, which is growing faster than chilled or ambient. "2018 was an outstanding year for frozen food in the UK, with the industry now worth £8.6 billion, with additional sales worth £340 million each year," says chief executive John Hyman. "We're really excited about the future growth potential of frozen food, and have set ourselves an industry target

to reach £10bn value. As online shopping becomes the norm within households, we expect to see the positive impact this has had on frozen sales continue. We are also not even halfway through the premiumisation journey for the industry as a whole, with the aim to see premium products across every single category. So with the innovation and pro-activeness that we have come to expect from our industry, I am very confident we will continue to see such gains maintained."

A trend towards quality has made its mark, with so many consumers considering that 'staying in is the new going out', retailers have been able to sell increasingly aspirational dishes. "Premiumisation and innovative NPDs across all frozen categories has been one of the biggest drivers of the industry's success in recent years," confirms John. "The quality and innovation that has been shown by the industry recently is offering shoppers tasty, restaurant-quality food in their own homes, with gourmet products such as dressed lobster and beef wellington available straight from the freezer, filling a consumer demand for high-quality food without the preparation."

A taste for premium

It's a trend the industry has been all too happy to accommodate. "Frozen in

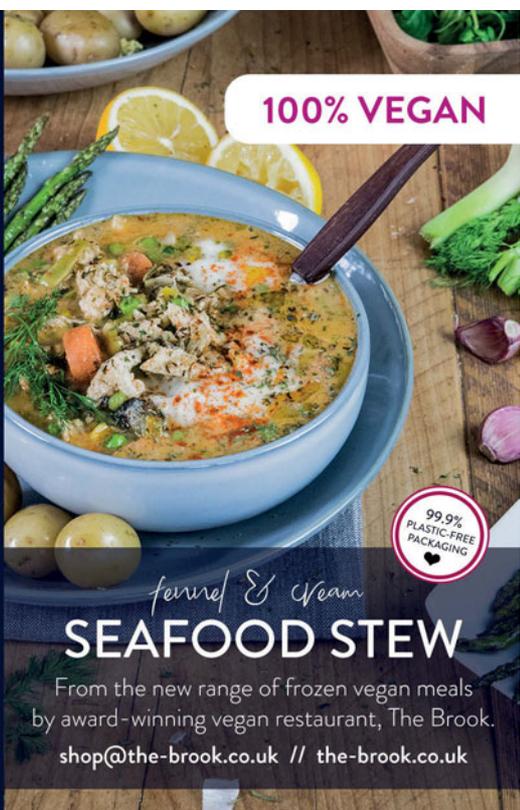
premiumising," agrees Karen Deans, director of field fare, which has recently added hand-finished stuffed pastas and pastry purses to its range of loose frozen. "For many years frozen food was perceived as the poor relation but in reality of course it's not. We all know that as soon as fruit and veg is picked it starts to lose its nutritional value, but that when it's blanched, used in a meal or sauce and then packed in a short space of time, the nutrients are locked within. I think the consumer is beginning to understand that. I think they're seeing too with the best frozen meals that they are a premium product, there's less wastage, and things that were once only available chilled can now be brought frozen and served at home as if it's something they've made themselves."

Karen's jumbo cod fish finger in a gluten-free crumb is a great example: the kind of meal which would trigger many an allergy-grappling parent to start to cook from scratch. The search for artisan makers willing to cater specifically for the frozen market, and keep your freezer cabinet a few steps ahead of what's available at your local Waitrose, has also evolved. "I'm always looking out for things that are new and unusual," says Karen. "A few years ago it was hard work, but in the last one or two years I constantly have artisan producers knocking on my door. Millennials are looking at unusual products, healthy meals. And they're willing to pay a bit more, so there's a plethora of new or young producers honing in on that marketplace, and talking to people like us."

A flavour of the future

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evolution is important, says Mintel, which identifies novel flavours, dishes and concepts as integral to the categories appeal. "Ready meals and ready-to-cook foods are an established part of many consumers' meal repertoires, with young adults being core users, and uptake falling with age," points out Mintel's report. "While the convenience of the products makes them a good fit for the busy lives of these young consumers, their appetite for more exciting flavours and cuisines will need to be catered for in order to retain their interest in the market."

One clear market trend affecting the millennials demographic is, of course, veganism, so it's not surprising that plant-based revolution is making its mark on frozen meals. Statisticians are struggling to track the rocketing demand for plant-based products but the 987% YOY growth reported by the Vegan Society in 2017 has shown no sign of losing momentum. In fact *The Economist* dubbed 2019

'the year of the vegan'. Supermarkets have scrambled to meet this market, with Iceland, Tesco and M&S leading the field in own-brand plant-based frozen meals. But Thea Brook, a new player entering the market after a successful foray in food service, sees a gap in the market for premium options to temp shoppers in independent retailers. "It's great that supermarkets are working on increasing the number of vegan dishes they offer," she starts, "but it's very early days with their product development and as a result a lot of the products aren't amazing."

Thea's perspective is informed by the evolution of her brand The Brook, which has metamorphosed from a couple of award-winning restaurants into a box meal service and – tellingly – a blast-frozen range for retail making its trade show debut at IFE next month. "It's not just enough to offer a meal free from animal products," Thea suggests. "It has to be a damn tasty meal too. That's where experienced vegan chefs are

needed. And often, really incredible vegan dishes require fairly premium ingredients and this isn't something large scale producers are happy to source or invest in."

So should you expect your customers to take their time at the freezer cabinet, avidly studying the nutritionals in the meal their holding, or are they likely to buy impulsively on flavour profile? "It really depends on where the consumer is on their personal journey with plant-based eating," says Thea. "Longer-term vegans are definitely more interested in flavour, as they know how to balance their nutritional intake with a varied diet. Those who are newer to it are, rightly, very interested in nutrients, to ensure they continue eating well as they switch. However, they're also very sensitive to taste,

as they're judging the dish based on years on eating animal-based foods. That's why we've always been very proud that our customer base has been mainly non-vegans, discovering a new way to eat – and loving it!"

Convenience counts

Back in the mainstream market, world cuisines are increasingly popular, with Euromonitor reporting that Asian ready meals recorded the highest value growth in frozen and chilled in 2018. "Average prices for these meals were significantly higher, demonstrating that consumers are willing to pay more for them," suggests the analyst's November report *Ready Meals in the United Kingdom*. British consumers are increasingly adventurous and willing to try new food that is encouraging the trend."

Whatever the tastes of your customers, the convenience of frozen – especially for shoppers who feel the guilt associated with binning abandoned perishables – will continue to appeal. Statistics from Mintel suggest the biggest slice of the market in frozen ready meals is for consumers who buy and eat them around once a month, with around 22% of shoppers calling on them one to two times a week. Weekday dinners are the most common time for consumers to crack into a ready meal, found Mintel, with the inclusion of premium ingredients falling only just behind low salt content and environmentally-friendly packaging as consumers.

Towards zero waste

With many households working to reduce their food waste, frozen also has an opportunity for growth with scratch cooks. "While frozen food offers vast ranges of high quality, prepared dishes that can be cooked

CHILL OUT

● **4.8%** – the year-on-year growth in total frozen food sales in the period ending Sept '18

● **£6.2bn** – the value of the UK's retail frozen food market across all categories

● **£74m** – additional consumer spend on ice cream during last year's scorching summer.

Source: Kantar Worldpanel

from frozen, another main driver for consumer use is the ability to cook homemade recipes using frozen ingredients, drastically cutting down preparation time and food waste," says John Hyman. "Component ingredients such as ready-chopped onions vegetables and herbs allow consumers to cook delicious meals straight from the freezer."

Health, another macro trend in the food and drink industry, is also well catered for. "Categories such as frozen fruits for smoothies and breakfast toppers, as well as quick and healthy products such as sweet potatoes and pre-prepared avocados have been real frozen success stories," says John. "They offer shoppers ease and flexibility while maintaining the freedom to cook from scratch. Frozen really can provide a solution for every consumer requirement."

"We see the future of frozen food as incredibly positive," John concludes. "As we continue to see innovation across the sector as a whole, and as consumers continue to harness the everyday relevance of frozen food with its premium quality, convenience and natural health credentials, we expect to see a move towards consumers visiting the freezer as often as the fridge."

“ 2018 was an outstanding year for frozen food in the UK, with the industry now worth £8.6 billion, with additional sales worth £340 million each year ”

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CHAMPAGNE COMES TO ENGLAND

Renowned French champagne houses are setting down roots in the UK. Robin Goldsmith finds out why



The Champenois aren't just watching English wine closely, they're involving themselves directly. In February 2018, Champagne house Vranken-Pommery Monopole released its first English sparkling wine, Louis Pommery England Brut, with grapes sourced from Hampshire, Essex and Sussex and named in honour of Pommery's founder. Made in collaboration with Hattingley Valley, this is the first time an English wine has been sold by a Champagne house. In May 2017, Champagne Taittinger became the first Grande Marque Champagne house to own and plant an English vineyard, Domaine Evremond, choosing the chalky soils of Chilham, Kent for their site. Initially 20 hectares (over 100,000 vines) were planted, but this is set to expand to 40 hectares with the first wines expected in 2023.

As interest and investment in English viticulture and vine plantings continue to grow each year with exports due to reach 25% of production in 2020, does the presence of Champagne houses on these shores represent how seriously English wine is being taken across the globe?

According to WineGB, the US is the primary export market for 2018/2019 with the metro market seen as key for English sparkling wine sales. Arnaud Brachet, president of ABCK Corp, the company responsible for importing and marketing Chapel Down in the

US, sees English sparkling wine's reputation growing rapidly within the trade as well as with consumers. "The timing to import English sparkling wine into the US is perfect now as the quality of these wines has reached world-class standards. English wines did not have much recognition or even awareness in the past, so there is a novelty element that makes English sparkling wine exciting and the Royal Wedding this year has focused attention too! American trade and consumers like to try new products and with English sparkling wine they are always pleasantly surprised, viewing it as an alternative to Champagne and premium sparkling wines like Crémant and Cava. The fact that leading Champagne houses invest in English sparkling wine is great recognition for the quality and growth potential of this category, as well as putting English sparkling wine even more in the spotlight!"

"English wine is a nascent but world class category, with a very bright future"

For Peter Richards MW, investment from Champagne houses represents substantial vindication of the commitment and quality evidenced by the country's top sparkling winemakers. However, recognition by the Champenois of the potential for world-class viticulture in the south of England is not new, as Richards

is keen to point out. "Jean-Manuel Jacquinet was instrumental in helping Nyetimber in its first few years, Hervé Jestin's been at Hambledon for a while now and Didier Pearson has been involved too. For major Champagne houses to put their money where their mouth is and put significant investment into English wine provides a ringing endorsement for just how far English wine has come. It's a nascent but world class category, with a very bright future."

So what is it about the English sparkling wine style in terms of its differentiation from Champagne that warrants the serious interest of the Champenois? "For a start, it's English", says Richards, "so may appeal to people for that reason. Stylistically, the differences are not super clear cut, especially as English winemakers become more and more proficient at imbuing their sparkling wines with complexity and elegance. That said, English fizz can often have a brightness of orchard fruit, allied to a vibrancy and urgency of acidity and structure, which can set it apart

from Champagne. For the Champenois, the appeal works on many levels. On the one hand, the UK is one of their biggest markets and they have historic links here, so it makes sense to support the category by investing in this country. It's also a hedge against climate change. It's no secret that Champagne has been warming up and harvests are tending to get earlier. Moving that bit further north into the UK can be a sensible move."

"Having competitors making other sparkling wines is good for everybody, spurring us all on to continue improving quality"

Champagne houses that aren't investing (yet) in the UK also view this phenomenon as a smart commercial mood. For example, Anne Gremillet of Champagne Gremillet sees the appeal of an extra revenue stream for Champagne houses as a clear driving factor in the decision of some Champenois to make wine

across La Manche. "It's not a question of moving Champagne to England; it is above all a new business opportunity. The companies who have invested recently are already big brand names known all over the world. It will be quite easy for them to create a second wine that will benefit from the influence of their main brand and even if this is not written on the label, it will be known as 'their second brand'. "Gremillet also makes the point that competition for sparkling wine prominence benefits the whole industry. "As a brand, Champagne still maintains its premium positioning at the very top of the quality ladder, so all the Champagne producers must work to create value if we want to maintain this. Having competitors making other sparkling wines is good for everybody, spurring us all on to continue improving quality."

While direct involvement and expertise from the Champenois can only benefit English winemaking knowledge and quality, it remains paramount that the end product has to be judged on its own merits.

“ As interest and investment in English viticulture and vine plantings continue to grow each year with exports due to reach 25% of production in 2020, does the presence of Champagne houses on these shores represent how seriously English wine is being taken across the globe? ”



“The recent interest from Champagne houses for planting in England makes me think that at last, time has arrived for the recognition of the great potential of English terroir and of the premium quality of English sparkling wines and what can be achieved here”

“The English wine industry is providing much needed rural development and jobs in agriculture at a time when that sector is adjusting to Brexit”

Seely is in no doubt that without the financial investment from people like Malcolm Isaac who believed deeply in the future of English sparkling wine, it is almost certain that the great potential of British terroir would have had less exposure. Simon Robinson, chairman of WineGB, who himself with his wife Nicola invested heavily in Hattingley Valley, praises the foresight of the early pioneers, but also advises some caution and a good dose of realism on future investments. “It is gratifying to see the vision of the relatively early, but more recent, entrants to the industry now being realised as increasing volumes of high quality wines are produced and sold both in the UK and overseas. The recent paper from WineGB, Looking to the Future, suggests that the industry will experience rapid growth for some time and that the UK will be seen as a producer of very high quality wine, also thereby providing much needed rural development and jobs in agriculture at a time when that sector is adjusting to Brexit. The greatest challenge at present is probably ensuring winemaking capacity keeps up with the increase in the planted area. Overall, the industry has a good future ahead of it, so long as investors keep a careful eye on matters and do not allow that ever

“Producing sparkling wine in England”, Gremillet adds, “is much less restrictive than in France for Champagne, as we have very strict regulations and quality control. English winemaking can be inspired by what we do in Champagne, but what it then has to do is not copy Champagne but find its own identity.”

“The time has arrived for the recognition of the great potential of English terroir”

At Exton Park Vineyard, visionary investor Malcolm Isaac saw the advantage of employing Corinne Seely, a French vigneronne with experience of making wine across the world. “I find English terroir fascinating to express, while the climate is the most challenging I’ve ever dealt with in my career”, she explains. “The recent interest from Champagne houses for planting in England makes me think that at last, time has arrived for the recognition of the great potential of English terroir and of the premium

quality of English sparkling wines and what can be achieved here. It is clear that Champagne houses have seen the opportunity of doing something special in England.”

While Seely sees much in common between Exton Park’s sloping, pure chalk soils and that of the Côte des Blancs, she also sees many terroir-based challenges. “There are so many differences in terms of density of plantation, pruning, rainfall, sunshine, dates of flowering and harvesting. No one doubts that it still remains a huge challenge to make super premium quality wines in England, even with direct expertise from the Champenois, but it will certainly increase the reputation of English sparkling wine if big Champagne names come here. Foreign investment should attract the attention of the whole world, becoming a good, free marketing strategy for English sparkling wines as long as they retain their identity and do not merely become a replica of sparkling wines from other countries.”

present danger, the romance of wine, to go to their heads.”

Robinson stresses that it’s also important to acknowledge the skills, talent and application of English winemakers. “It is very encouraging to see our home grown talent coming through and Plumpton College must be congratulated for enabling this to happen. While in the early days of English sparkling wine, French (and other) winemakers provided – and continue to provide – a body of expertise, it was always going to be necessary to develop a cadre of UK winemakers who understand our conditions. We need to do more to produce a larger cadre of viticulturalists who understand our unique climatic conditions, but I have no doubt that will happen over time. Indeed, we are now even seeing examples of developments and techniques here being reported with interest back to Champagne, which is a very satisfying position to be in.”

“The number who decline to drink English sparkling wine at all has shrunk considerably and continues to fall”

Despite the positive vibes coming from the industry, many consumers say they still prefer to pay £30-£40 for a bottle of Champagne, rather than spending the same amount on English sparkling wine. Therefore, an important issue is whether big names like Taittinger and Pommery can help English sparkling wine increase its appeal to the British public, so that more people will view the category as one worthy of premium price points. Robinson offers his thoughts on this: “There will always be those who prefer Champagne, just as there are people who prefer Burgundy to Bordeaux, but the number who decline to drink English sparkling wine at all has shrunk considerably and continues to fall. There are similar developments outside the UK, with the US in particular being attracted by what we can offer. The exciting development recently is that the leading English sparkling wine producers are increasingly not seeking to mimic Champagne any longer. They are developing their own style and approach which seeks to satisfy their customers. That can only be good for the industry as a whole and English sparkling wine will, I am sure, continue to evolve, as makers respond to the challenges faced by Prosecco and Cava as well as Champagne. Also there are already some producers moving into other methods of sparkling wine production, which will almost certainly command lower prices and offer a wider variety of sparkling wine styles to choose from.”

While Brexit remains the elephant in the room (or should that be vineyard?), Brachet is not unduly worried by the economic uncertainty this brings. “We don’t really see any direct connection between Brexit and English sparkling wine in the US as of now. It’s still a very early stage for English sparkling wine in the US and both trade and consumers are focusing on discovering and tasting the wine. If Brexit leads to significant changes in exchange rates or import duties, there could be an impact on pricing, but it is too early to have any clear visibility on that. What is clear is that the future of English sparkling wine in the US will be bright, as its top quality gets more and more recognized by wine connoisseurs and consumers in general.”

Continuing investment, rising quality, global recognition and availability of English sparkling wine, the effects of climate change, the development of a clear identity and style plus increasing knowledge and expertise among the winemakers themselves are forging a positive future for this home-grown industry. Direct involvement of the Champenois will not only help share expertise and further the skills of winemaking within the UK, but it should also play a significant role in educating the broader wine-buying public in understanding why English sparkling wine should command similar price points to other traditional method sparklers, notably Champagne. Surely we can all raise a glass to that... of English bubbly, of course!



The final word
on fine food

THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

In the run up to St Patrick's Day, London-based chef, Anna Haugh, discusses her passion for Irish produce



I cook Modern European food with an Irish influence. Although I'm based in London, my food is connected to Ireland and I'm always looking for great farmers, butchers, small fisheries and cheese suppliers. In the kitchen, I like to make everything from scratch and as the seasons change, I get excited about changing the menu to suit – this is made easier when you have brilliant Irish producers and suppliers to celebrate.

One of my favourite suppliers in Ireland is Burren Farm in Kilfenora. Stephen and Eva Hegarty believe in

sustainable farming and don't use chemical fertilisers or pesticides – their ethos is 'farm to plate' and they keep everything as natural as possible. They have a small herd of continental beef cattle and free-range Saddleback pigs. Everything is farmed in a traditional way and they keep their cattle outdoors, with shelter, all year around – always producing the best quality pork and beef.

Another favourite is the The Burren Smokehouse, owned and managed by husband and wife team, Birgitta and Peter Curtin. The salmon arrives fresh from the organic fish farms on the Irish Atlantic coast and the team smoke to the highest standards on-site.

Clonakilty Blackpudding is where I get my puddings. It's the leading black pudding in Ireland, made using premium Irish beef. Colette Twomey is the sole owner and the only person who knows the secret spice mix – using a recipe that originated in the town of Clonakilty in the 1880s – and hasn't changed it since.

I often use Wild Irish Seaweed, which is sustainably hand harvested by the Talty Family off the coast of Co. Clare. All their seaweeds are 100% naturally grown and organically certified, ensuring only the finest end product.

St Tola Irish Goat Cheese is known as one of the premium artisan products in Ireland. It has been hand-made to suit individual customers' needs and requirements in the townland of Inagh, just south of the Burren in County Clare since the early 1980s. The St Tola herd of goats are reared on 65 acres of unspoiled pasturelands – considered some of the finest and purest farmland of its type in Europe.

I would also recommend The Market Butchers who now have sites in Kildare, Rathcoole and Dublin, but deliver to customers far and wide. They are committed to producing farm-fresh meats by sourcing the best produce available from responsible farms, following time-honoured methods of selecting, hanging and maturing, and using traditional butchering methods and skills with a modern twist.

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YES
89%

NO
11%

DON'T
KNOW
0%

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are distributed
Farm Shop &
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and IFE.

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

Next issue available: February 2019

Subscriptions 01293 312188
specialityfood@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk

The BAR rate UK £29.25. Overseas £40.00
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TALKING SHOP

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Anyone who knows me well, in a professional or personal capacity, will know of my penchant for communication. This takes many forms; as well as it being impossible to stop me mid-chat when I'm waxing lyrical about the something or other that has commanded my interest that week, I'm resolute in my philosophy that communication makes the world go round.

Consider the times you've experienced impass in life. How often could the impass have been avoided by both parties taking the time to have a conversation – to understand all sides of the situation and go on to work, together, to find a solution which works for both? Instead of this, I bet that bad communication led to tempers being frayed and discussions ending on a note unsatisfying for both, with neither side having got what they needed and nobody keen to repeat the occasion.

Moving into a retail context, consider this scenario. You're in a food shop, there are lots of customers around and the staff seem busy and harassed. You stop one of them to ask a question, but get a brief and perfunctory answer back doesn't quite satisfy your curiosity but does act to make you feel uncomfortable taking up their time and space in their store. They clearly don't have the time to give your query much thought and you don't feel able to request more information from them, so you leave none the wiser while they walk off stressed.

We've all been there, so why isn't more time given to avoiding this

happening again? Why aren't more solutions utilised – ways around the impass created when busy staff meet curious customers? One way to cater for their questions is to answer them before they're even asked through display and signage. But if the story behind every item in your shop was told on a sign, you'd a) be faced with information overload, and b) struggle to create attractive displays. Instead, treat this as a long-term change of

approach to your retail displays. Create hero products and create some literature to help your customers connect with it; these could be exciting new additions to your shelves, items created by a local maker you feel deserves a bigger profile in your community, or food and drink which plug into a current trend you're dipping your toe into.

A great number of the products you sell in your establishment

have a story to tell – you've chosen to stock them for a reason beyond their margin. A product's flavour could be worthy of tasting notes and pairing suggestions, it could have an unusual back story, or it could be a great ambassador for the local area. Consumers come to you for a connection with the food and drink they're buying – it's why they're shopping at your establishment for certain items rather than their local supermarket, so make sure they're catered for even in the event of stressed staff. A couple of hours spent creating educational displays could lead to informed and appreciative customers, and the look of a shop passionate about its place in the sector. That's a win-win in my book.

“ A couple of hours spent creating educational displays could lead to informed customers and the look of a shop passionate about its place in the sector ”

5 MINUTES WITH... ALLAN WATTS

Sleep Well



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?

Finishing my novel. It's only taken 12 years so far...

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

I worked on the beach at a deck chair concession. Best summer ever.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Endeavour. It is the one thing that links all species – the constant effort to improve or survive.

TEA OR COFFEE?

Wine.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?

I was a graphic designer for a short while at a printer. I was rubbish at it, not an artistic bone in my body and my boss was horrid. Thankfully I have a great design team working on our Sleep Well brand!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?

Customer feedback – knowing that you have made a real positive difference for someone is awesome.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?

Finances

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?

Unbelievably diverse and full of so many clever people doing amazing things with real passion and devotion.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?

Picnic and a bottle of something nice with my family and the dog sitting by Alcock Tarn high above the Lake District. I'm not sure you can get closer to heaven.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?

What's for you won't go by you. Though on my tombstone I want "I still say I was right".

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?

Not sure if it's weird but certainly the most offensive was andouille sausage in France.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?

Currently, *This is Going To Hurt* by Adam Kay but there are hundreds on our study bookshelves I could read several times over.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?

Savoury

DIARY DATES

February

12th-14th
ICE CREAM & GELATO EXPO
Yorkshire Event Centre, Harrogate
ice-cream.org

13th-15th
BIOFACH
Nuremberg, Germany
biofach.de/en

17th-21st
GULFOOD
Dubai
gulfood.com

25th-10th
FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT
Nationwide
fairtrade.org.uk

25th-27th
FRA/FARMA CONFERENCE
Oxford
farma.org.uk

27th-28th
THE CASUAL DINING SHOW
ExCeL, London
casualdiningshow.co.uk

March

5th-7th
EXPOWEST CORNWALL
Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge
expowestcornwall.co.uk

10th-11th
HARROGATE FINE FOOD SHOW
Yorkshire Event Centre, Harrogate
gff.co.uk/shows/ffsn

17th-20th
IFE
ExCeL, London
ife.co.uk

18th-20th
PRO2PAC
ExCeL, London
pro2pac.co.uk



ExCeL London
17 - 20 March 2019!

The trade mark Portuguese Beef aims the promotion and international diffusion of the beef from Portuguese autochthonous breeds, namely and especially the breeds Arouquesa, Barrosã, Cachena, Marinhova, Maronesa, Minhota and Mirandesa.

Promoted by the National Federation of the Local Breed Associations- FERA, it will attend <<IFE - The International Food & Drink Event>>, in London, from 17 to 20 March, 2019 (Pavilion: Meat & Seafood; Stand: S2511).

Along with its presence at IFE, it will also promote a tasting event <<Portuguese Beef Tasting - UK>> on the 18 March, 2019 (place to be announced soon on the website and social networks of the trademark.)

This event will make it possible to taste the meat of seven Portuguese autochthonous breeds and will allow the exchange of views and synergies among all guests.

The aim of these activities is to promote the authenticity and tradition of Portuguese endogenous products and set up commercial relationships with agents from the food sector.

This trademark is part of the project Portuguese Beef, co-financed by the Operational Program for Competitiveness and Internationalization Portugal 2020 and involves a total investment of 426.637,00 euros, co-financed at 85% by Fundo Europeu de Desenvolvimento Regional (European Regional Development Fund).





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