

SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS

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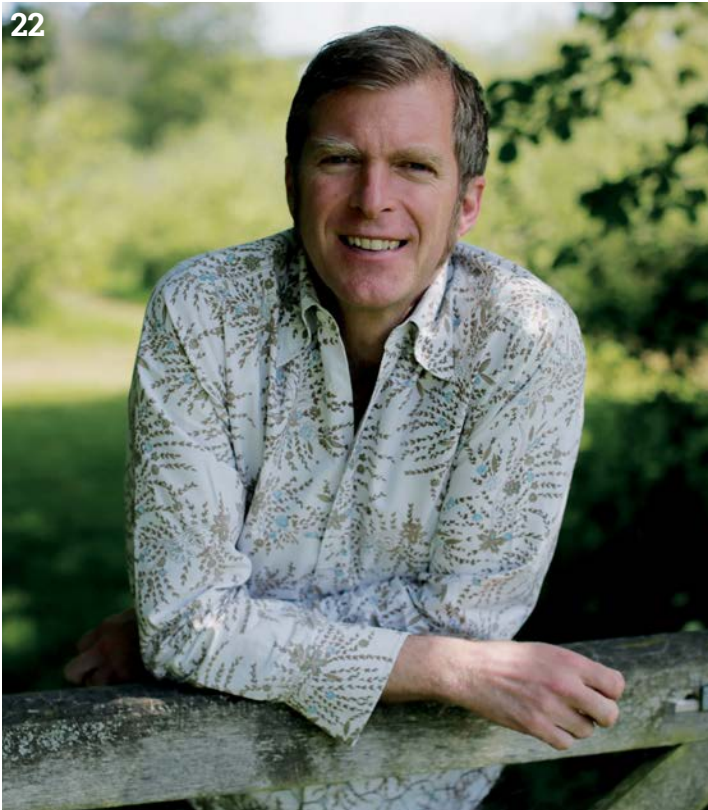
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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the January issue of *Speciality Food*, the first of 2020 and one which I hope will fire you up for the year to come. While a few lengths of tinsel and sparkly lights may remain in the windows of homes and on the high street, all eyes are set on the next 12 months – businesses and individuals alike wondering what changes they'll see and have to implement as 2020 draws on.

One topic we're sure to see a lot of is veganism, and so within this issue you'll find a report on just that; highlighting the who, what, where, when and why to explore this increasingly popular sector (p. 32). We also introduce two of the best trade shows kicking off 2020, both sure to give your stocking decisions a welcome boost of inspiration. You'll find Top Drawer S/S 2020 on page 14 and Scotland's Speciality Food Show on page 16. Speaking of Scotland, we highlight its brightest and best on page 18.

Lots more to follow in this edition, too – read on and let us inspire you for 2020.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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JANUARY

Veganism received a huge push in the media this month with the launch of the now-infamous Greggs vegan sausage roll, as a result of which the bakery chain reported soaring sales. The Veganuary campaign had its most successful to date, with a record-breaking 250,310 people from 190 countries around the world signing up to take part in the month-long pledge. Meanwhile, Tesco announced it would be closing counters in around 90 of its stores.

FEBRUARY

The Midlands Co-operative in Gloucestershire was the UK's first major retailer to make it mandatory for food and drink suppliers to tell shoppers where their ingredients are sourced from, in a bid to deliver consumer transparency along the food chain.

MARCH

March saw the launch of the first Future Food Awards – a collaboration between *Speciality Food* and The FoodTalk Show – to celebrate the new brands and innovations revolutionising the food and drink industry. Brexit uncertainty continued, with the government announcing the UK's temporary tariff regime in the event of a no-deal.

APRIL

Barnsley-based Cannon Hall Farm Shop was named Retailer of the Year

2019: a look back at the year in fine food

From the launch of the Future Food Awards to the Brexit deadline extension and so much more, we take a look at what 2019 brought the food and drink industry

at the Farm Shop & Deli Awards, as well as picking up the North East regional and Farm Shop Large Retailer accolades. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) blocked the proposed merger of Sainsbury's and Asda, stating in its report that it would lead to expected price rises, reduced quality and choice of products available and poorer shopping experiences.

MAY

Cotswold Fayre celebrated its 20th anniversary by hosting a major environmental conference for suppliers in the food and drink sector, with presentations on topics such as biodegradable packaging.

JUNE

The government announced Natasha's Law, which requires businesses to provide a full ingredients list on pre-packaged foods. The new legislation followed

the tragic death of teenager Natasha Ednan-Laperouse after an allergic reaction to a Pret a Manger baguette in 2016, and is planned to come into force by summer 2021.

JULY

The dairy industry came together to see The Bath Soft Cheese Company win Supreme Champion at the International Cheese Awards for its Wyfe of Bath cheese. Managing director Hugh Padfield said that it was an "achievement that every cheesemaker dreams of, for a small rural business like ours it's incredible." In other news Macknade Food Hall celebrated its 40th birthday with the acquisition of a new site in Ashford.

AUGUST

News broke across the world about the thousands of fires in the Amazon rainforest, with many of them started to make way for agricultural

purposes. More than 50 major retailers signed a letter to Chancellor of the Exchequer Sajid Javid demanding action be taken to fix the business rates system. The letter, co-ordinated by the BRC, was signed by retailers including ASDA, Marks & Spencer and Iceland.

SEPTEMBER

In show news, it was announced that IFE would be joining up with HRC and Pro2Pac for a new annual event, starting from March 2021 at London's ExCel. Chancellor Sajid Javid announced his plan to raise the National Living Wage to £10.50 within the next five years. Luxury retailer Fortnum & Mason unveiled its revamped confectionery

department, complete with 150 new chocolates for its loose chocolate counter.

OCTOBER

Nourished was pronounced the inaugural Supreme Champion of the Future Food Awards, having impressed judges with its innovative personalisation technology. The Brexit deadline of the 31st came and went, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson forced to request an extension date of January 2020.

NOVEMBER

Flooding affected homes and businesses across the northern parts of the UK. According to the NFU, heavy rainfall across mainly the East Midlands and North East left thousands of acres of farmland under water, with the organisation calling for a long-term strategic plan. The government announced grants of up to £25,000 for farmers affected by the flooding.

DECEMBER

Millions went out to cast their vote on the 12th in the general election, with the Conservatives winning by the largest majority since the 1980s. PM Boris Johnson's main campaign promise was to "get Brexit done".

“ Veganuary had a record-breaking 250,310 people from 190 countries around the world signing up to take part ”



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JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES



“What to do about January?”

After December, the busiest month of the year at nearly 12% of our annual takings, comes the stark reality of January at just over 7% of our takings.

The party's over. 31 days of low sales, bad weather and detox diets lie ahead with not a daffodil in sight. Plus the potential embarrassment of selling products that have been over ordered – or so I am told!

As for strategic rethinks we've had a few – but then again too few to mention. And the shop has recently had a messy divorce from collective New Year Resolutions.

However, January may not be as bad as intuition might suggest. For a start it is not the quietest month of the year for us. It was in 2019 and it was in 2014, but generally it sits ahead of 'diminutive' February and 'currently on annual leave' August in terms of sales.

The real problem with January is that it takes a week for the shop to get out of bed following the Christmas hangover and searing reality of stock taking. Once up and running there is nothing much to quicken the pulse of the paying public in retailing terms.

In America they seem to approach the problem with large quantities of zest and zing. I recently saw a calendar of events from the US with a plethora of retailing opportunities. For example January 7th is I Am Not Going To Take It Any More Day. (We've had a few of those in Partridges, to be honest). January 14th is Dress Up Your Pet Day, and January 24th is National Compliment Day, which the UK should embrace immediately. American foodies have been no

slouches in this area either. January 11th is National Milk Day, January 12th is Hot Tea Day, January 23rd is National Pie Day, January 25th is Gourmet Coffee Day and January 27th is Chocolate Cake Day. I have no idea how successful any of these days are but retailers are not taking January lying down.

Is there anything we can come up with to gently engage the emotions and mental palates of customers at the beginning of the year? January 3rd is JRR Tolkien's birthday and, although too early for serious campaigns, might it inspire January to become Fictional Foods month, where we try to imitate imaginary literary creations? After all, the great man himself 'invented' a lot of foods – for example lembas, a bread wrapped in leaves, made of banana, coconut and maple syrup. He also invented cram, miruvor, honey cake and a vitality drink called orc. Roald Dahl came up with frobscottle and snozberries, C.S. Lewis toffee tree fruit, Ian Fleming toot sweets and JK Rowling cauldron cakes and butter beer. Lisa Simpson came up with soy pops.

Like so many things, the Greeks had a word for it: Ambrosia – the mythical food or drink of the Gods. Although some restaurateurs, including Heston Blumenthal, have experimented with the concept, it is probably too obscure, too difficult and too litigious to go down this route for a January speciality food initiative. The first priority is always non fictional profit. However, if anybody can come up with an engaging January campaign please do not hesitate to let me know.

Mintel reveals consumer trends set to shape the industry's next 10 years

Market intelligence agency Mintel has unveiled its **Consumer Trends 2030 report**, which contains seven core drivers that are set to shape global markets over the next 10 years. Within each are predictions as to how that market will develop in 2020, over the next five years and the next decade. Highlights for the food and drink industry include:

WELLBEING

By the year 2025 we can expect to experience the “red meat consumption move from mainstream to luxury to taboo.”

SURROUNDINGS

In 2030 it's forecast that we will see “more publically owned, shared and pop-up commerce, recreation spaces fostering local, micro-business and shared gardening and agricultural space.”

TECHNOLOGY

By 2025, Mintel expects us to see “Fully unmanned retail operations limited to discount and convenience stores and more consumers demand human interaction when shopping”.

RIGHTS

“Cancel culture’ or ‘call out culture’, is on the rise,” says Mintel. “Upset about the lack of data privacy and security, government accountability, and trust in brands, consumers are lashing out. No company, brand, or person is safe in today's social-media-driven world. However, consumers want companies and brands to stand for something.

Expect to see a rise in consumer backlash over the next 10 years as consumers continue to find their voice in the digital era. We will also see pushback against the backlash emerge by 2030, as consumers tire

of the seemingly endless cycle of reactive discourse.”

IDENTITY

In 2020, anticipate that “People [will] find ways to disconnect from social media, encouraged by tech companies offering solutions that allow for more mindful usage.”

VALUE

We'll see a holistic approach to business in 2025, as “Brands prioritise people and the planet over profitability” and “Purposefulness and ethical business philosophy rise to the top”.

EXPERIENCES

In 2020 expect to see “A renewed focus on older traditions and celebrations that are centred around heritage and nostalgia, as they bring communities together.”

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DTM PRINT

DTM Print, international OEM and solution provider for speciality printing systems, has recently launched the DTM FX810e Foil Imprinter for finishing and highlighting product labels with a width of up to 220 mm (8.66”).



Like its “little brother”, the FX510e, the new DTM FX810e adds brilliant shiny metallic or laminated highlights both to blank or already pre-printed labels, whether they have been produced by inkjet, laser, LED, offset or flexo printing. Fast and accurate one-colour printing for either adding data like simple text or bar codes to pre-printed labels or printing single-coloured labels is possible as well.

DTM FX810e features a robust metal housing, an intuitive to use colour touchscreen and an optional built-on guillotine cutter, and can be connected via USB 2.0 and Ethernet 10/100. Its maximum print speed is 101.6 mm (4”) per second. It uses DTM Print certified thermal transfer ribbons with a maximum width of 220 mm.

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CHARLES CAMPION



“New year, new possibilities”

Thank goodness we have the New Year to jingle in our pockets. January lies before us like a shiny new penny – always presuming that coinage hasn’t been abandoned on the grounds that, in today’s expensive times, there is very little that can be bought without folding money. For many tartan folk January means attending a traditional Burns Night Supper. The first of these was held on 29th January 1801 and planned by an enthusiastic detachment of the Argyle Militia who marched out to Burns Cottage near Alloway for a dinner to celebrate the poet’s birthday, blissfully unaware that they had got the wrong date.

Today Burns Night is celebrated on 25th January and has become a focus for unbridled Scottishness. Policemen on knife patrol in the cities will face the interesting challenge of handling large kilted highlanders carrying one – or sometimes two – traditional dirks tucked into their socks. Should you be invited to a Burns Night, brace yourself for haggis, neaps and tatties; long poems (you will doubtless remember To A Mouse, if only for the famous line “That wee cowering timorous beastie”), or perhaps you favour My Love Is Like A Red Red Rose, and then there’s the block buster Ode To A Haggis. All this against a backdrop of many “wee drams” and the plaintive drone of the bagpipes.

In the 1970s traditional haggis was banned from America because of the sheep’s offal involved, and until recently there was much grumbling about dual standards – before the advent of the vegetarian

haggis which enabled vegetarian diners, and even vegans, to join in on Burns Night. So it’s “Fair fa’ your honest, sonsie face, great chieftain o’ the pudding-race!” – a treat whatever your haggis may be made from.

Among a few latecomers to the 2019 seasonal curiosities line-up is New York Classic Beer’s 60 second commercial. In the ad the star billing goes to Tom Markle Jnr, brother of Meghan Markle Duchess of Sussex, who is described by the PRs as a “British Royal”. The ad is described as a “spoof” of the television show The Royals, and in it New York Classic Beer is depicted as being more valuable than the “Crown Jewels”. Great taste, Tom...

The prize for 2019’s best bandwagon was CBD by a mile, with vegan food nudged into the runner-up spot. Do you fancy a hemp mini éclair to keep your canapé offer on trend? Maitre Choux is based in London and offers all manner of buns and canapes for its Events Catering Menu, including the afore-mentioned mini éclair described as a particular hit “in the world of culinary experimentation, a hedonistic delicacy”.

Hopefully we can all look back over 2019 and shrug off the hard times... particularly the sufferings of the high street and the political headless chickens. Much of the woe can be tracked back to the internet’s full frontal attacks on retail, and “beat them at their own game” may be the most viable strategy. Let 2020 be the year that things perk up, a year when you might just keep those ambitious New Year Resolutions.

Flooding impacts businesses across food and drink sector

Businesses and farmers across the UK felt the effects of intense rainfall last autumn, with areas mostly in the northern parts of the country experiencing floods. According to the NFU, farmers primarily based across the East Midlands and North East reported the worst rainfall in living memory, which left farmland, crops and livestock badly affected and thousands of acres under water. The organisation demands that long-term strategic plans to mitigate future flood risk and better manage water are put into place.

NFU President Minette Batters said, “The rainfall that some parts of the country have been experiencing over the past few months underlines the vulnerability of farming businesses, the fragility of returns to farmers, their exposure to volatility and ultimately resulting in an impact on their bottom line.

“It’s why the next Government and

its agencies need to take water-related issues seriously. Some of our most productive and highest value agricultural land is vulnerable to flooding and deserves to be protected.

“Any future domestic agricultural policy must ensure there are measures in place for farm businesses to manage volatility, particularly in the face of increasingly unpredictable weather.”

The government announced that farmers who suffered uninsurable damage across Yorkshire and the Midlands would be able to apply for grants of up to £25,000 to cover repair costs such as clearing debris or recovering damaged land.

Homes and businesses were also deeply affected, with grants of up to £5,000 to those seriously impacted available to pay for property improvements such as flood doors.

Claire Millner, owner of Hartington

Cheese & Wine Co Ltd told *Speciality Food*: “As a small business with three shops, all in rural areas, and with a distribution run for wholesale customers in the same area as our shops, the recent flooding has had a major impact on us. Our shop at Cromford had to close as the roads around Matlock were impassable, and we couldn’t deliver to a large number of our customers. The biggest impact, however, has been the poor attendance at our Christmas markets which should now be in full swing.

“We rely heavily on the income from these shows to help us cover our outgoings in January and February (which historically are the quietest months for cheese sales). For example the ground around Chatsworth is so waterlogged cars are not being allowed to park unless the visitors have pre booked. This has meant a dramatic shortfall in visitors at the market and horrendous loss of earnings for the stallholders.”

Anthony Poole, retail and production manager at Croots Farm Shop & Café told us that fortunately their site hadn’t been affected, “but we did have to cancel a tasting evening as several suppliers were unable to make it to us.”

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EEQF campaign launched to promote certified food and wine

A European project that aims to promote certified food and wine products has been launched. The Enjoy European Quality Food (EEQF) campaign was presented to food and drink journalists, trade professionals and institutions in London on 20th November.

The three-year long informative campaign intends to promote food products whose quality is certified by the PDO, (Protected Designation of Origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indication), TSG (Traditional Speciality Guaranteed) and DOCG (Controlled and Guaranteed Denomination of

Origin) designations.

Five countries will be involved in the project, including Italy, Germany, the UK, Spain and Poland, where over the next three years there will be events aimed at bringing consumers and institutions closer to the Italian and European food and wine world.

Six Italian products of wine, cheese and olive oil are at the heart of the project, and Italy is the leading country with the highest number of PDO products. It's said that Italian and European consumers are keen to purchase certified products. 2019 marked a record for the export of

Made in Italy cheese, especially for PDO and PGI products, with a 14% rise compared to the previous year.

Libero Giovanni Stradiotti, president of the Consortium for the protection of Provolone Valpadana, commented that "the general objective of the project is to improve the knowledge of the quality food and wine products, which have cultural and territorial characteristics, in order to make European consumers aware of the products' food safety, environmental issues and organoleptic features to improve their presence in the target markets."

Indie retail techniques help defy Autumn footfall figures

Rainy weather and Brexit uncertainty were named as factors that kept shoppers away from the high street last autumn, according to figures from the BRC-Springboard Footfall and Vacancies Monitor. During the four weeks from 29th September to 26th October 2019, UK footfall saw a year-on-year decline of 3.2%.

Springboard marketing and insights director Diane Wehrle said, "The drop in footfall of -3.2% was the worst result for October in seven years. Whilst it can't be regarded as a purely pre-Brexit breakdown as the weather also played a part, the prevailing political uncertainty must be having a considerable impact on activity given the low level of consumer confidence."

The figures also highlighted that on the high street footfall declined at a steeper rate than in September, at 4.9%.

It's not all doom and gloom for independents however, with Alice Evans, co-owner of Broad Bean deli, saying that the business didn't experience dips in visitor numbers. She told *Speciality Food*, "Our sales are up 20% on October last year; but we are still a growing business with developing marketing strategies and inventive ideas. I think that it is important to remember that as a



small independent food retailer we can adapt much quicker to changes in consumer shopping. People want plastic-free, we can deliver plastic-free within a few weeks rather than a few years; whereas multinationals are already buying packaging for next year while we buy month-on-month. We launched 'meet the producer' in conjunction with Buy-From Food and Drink on Thursday mornings throughout October to try to draw people in out of the rain to sample products and meet the people behind them which were a huge success.

Both consumers and producers enjoyed them and we saw an increase in sales of those products in the weeks following the events.

"Also, people have to eat and whereas uncertain Brexit plans may make people cut back or hold fire from making larger purchases, day-to-day shopping for food continues whatever the climate and whatever the weather. A large percentage of our customers are affluent and retired and shop on a daily basis. It's going to take more than politics and weather to stop them shopping."

PARTNER CONTENT



COMPLY WITH CONFIDENCE

SALSA has launched a new Label Check service for smaller producers

SALSA (the UK's Safe and Local Supplier Approval Scheme) has launched a Label Check service which will review, assess and proof for 'final approval' product labels in compliance with current UK legislation. The service provides essential security of declaration for small companies who want to 'get it right first time.'

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRODUCT LABELLING

Successful and legally compliant food packaging design has so many jobs to do. It must protect the product, catch the shopper's eye and interest, communicate brand values and the quality of the product inside, as well as be distinct and recognisable to loyal customers. Most importantly, it must tell the consumer everything they need to know about the product, so they can make a fully informed decision about what is a safe and appropriate choice for them.

Smaller producers require the same high quality of technical advice on product labelling as larger companies and all need to work to the same rules. For those without in-house technical and legal resources, SALSA Label Check provides an extra level of security for producers. Get it right and not only will it help sell a product, it will ensure consumers are given the critical information they need to make confident and informed food choices based on diet, allergies, personal taste or cost.

"Accurate and compliant labelling is critical to protecting consumer welfare and the health of a business," says scheme founder Chris Grimes. "Concerns over making correct allergen declarations, the requirement for Nutrition Value signalling and getting a label 100% right can leave a business owner feeling bogged down in technical details and unsure of their claims. All reputable manufacturers share the same fear that if something isn't correct on their labels, it could result in a costly recall, a factory closure or as we have seen, fatal harm to a customer."

HOW SALSA CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS

SALSA will check a business's existing labels and advise what they need to change, or if they don't have artwork, the Scheme's technical team will work with the company to provide the required legal text, including accurate ingredient, allergen and nutrition information, ensuring the information a company wants to display is both legal and correct in representing their product to consumers.

Scheme development manager, Bonnie Joplin adds, "Our experience tells us that the Food Labelling regulations can be very daunting for smaller producers. New products, improved recipes, changes in legislation, it's essential to tie it all together in one small information sheet – and that's just the legalities. SALSA is now able to provide businesses with further support so that they, and ultimately the consumer, are less vulnerable to the potentially severe consequences of getting labelling wrong, especially when it comes to issues critical to food safety."

Chris continues, "SALSA has been working with small producers for over 10 years and has always supported innovation when underpinned by a firm foundation in food safety. Small producers often realise their expertise doesn't extend to all areas and can leave them feeling exposed. This is where SALSA can help, by giving a business full confidence in their labels and assurance for their customers."

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FDF calls on government support in latest manifesto

The Food and Drink Federation (FDF) is calling on the next Government to support the industry in its manifesto.

Within the manifesto are five key policies that the organisation says the next administration must implement to ensure the UK's food and drink manufacturing industry continues to thrive.

Among these are to prioritise the closest possible UK-EU trade and regulatory relationship, support efforts to make food production and consumption more environmentally sustainable, and to help tackle climate change.

Other points include driving productivity with the Food and Drink Sector Council, work with industry to develop home-grown talent and boost skills to equip the industry for its future and to tackle obesity and other dietary concerns through a holistic, evidence-based partnership.

The industry employs over 450,000 people across the UK and

is worth more than £31 billion.

FDF chief executive Ian Wright CBE said, "We know the next government – of whatever political hue – will want to tackle issues like obesity and plastic packaging. To do that successfully, it will need to work effectively with the industry and the FDF."

"The food and drink manufacturing industry touches every person, every community and every constituency in the country. It's the UK's largest manufacturing industry. Its success is integral to the country's wider economic prosperity, with an impact far beyond London and the South East."

"Strategic partnerships with government, including the Food and Drink Sector Council, have been long overdue but are finally delivering. The next administration must seize upon this once-in-a-generation opportunity to develop these relationships and build the food and drink industry our people demand and deserve."

Farm shop celebrates 100 years by giving back to the community

The Gog Farm Shop in Cambridge is celebrating 100 years in business by giving back to the local community with its '100 Good Gog Things'. The project is a way to say thank you to customers and make a difference within the area, and is set to run until September 2020. The list of activities includes: a free shop for one lucky customer each month, donating activity sheets to the children's wards at the hospital and local schools and hosting a meatball month supper to raise money for young people with muscle dystrophy.

Operations director Marcus Bradford said, "We are a family business, and wanted to say thank you to our local community for supporting us and helping us over the years. It is really important to give back, and it's really nice to good things for your community and the environment."



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Indies shun Black Friday

Footfall figures from Black Friday defied predictions that Brexit uncertainty and low consumer confidence would impact on sales. Retail intelligence experts Springboard announced that Black Friday saw a rise in footfall of 3.3% in comparison to 2018. Shopping centres fared the best, with an increase in footfall of 6.5%.

Diane Wehrle, insights director at Springboard commented, "This positive result may well 'seal the deal' for retailers in terms of their commitment to Black Friday moving forward, as they will have claimed shoppers early on in the Christmas

trading period, giving them the opportunity to steal a march on their rivals."

While retailers on the high street took part in the Black Friday sales, for many independent food and drink retailers it was business as usual over that weekend. Matthew March Smith, co-founder of online retailer Pong Cheese said, "We're not a big discounter anyway and we certainly don't often go over our threshold of 10-20% offer rates, and only in exceptional circumstances. It seems clear that, especially with food purchases, Black Friday is a gimmick that simply draws orders

out of customers who would naturally order at some point in the run up to Christmas anyway. All that seems to happen for a lot of retailers is that their revenue is drawn into late November and away from December, and with food businesses, orders being made in late November bring issues of their own such as Best Before dates not lasting until the time they want it delivered, i.e. Christmas. We'd rather build the sales to a crescendo in the week before the 25th."

Barrie Thomson from The High Street Delicatessen added, "Our job is to showcase and celebrate the start-ups, the kitchen table creatives, the folk who do things the right way. It's tough for the small guys. Their margins are tight. We don't squeeze them normally... that would make the very pips in their exquisite jams squeak. So, why do it on Black Friday? No apologies, but that's not our style."



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SUE NELSON

"New year, new you"

The celebrations have finished, pulled turkey made into a curry for the freezer, wrapping paper recycled, unwanted presents donated to charity or put on eBay. The house is tidy once again, but the feeling of overindulgence and a bloated stomach persists especially now all the holiday adverts are out, with slim, toned and suntanned models posing in the surf of an exotic destination – time to go in search of unrealistic unsustainable solutions to lose half a stone (or maybe more).

But it's not easy to decide how best to safely lose weight for a new year, and what to buy to make that happen. The Government has issued conflicting healthy eating advice over the years... Fat made you fat, now carbs make you fat. Butter is bad, but spreads are worse. Sugar is bad but there again so are artificial sweeteners. Dark chocolate is fine but milk chocolate is not. Wine is good but only one glass every couple of days. Avocados? Eggs? Soya? Can't remember what the advice is on those are any more.

The health service is overwhelmed by diet-related health catastrophes including heart disease, diabetes, strokes and tooth decay, and the most recent national campaigns are linking obesity with cancer. Over-processed industrial scale food is making us sick, and – bombarded by 'advice' – we simply don't know what to eat any more. A recent survey claimed that just under half of us are fed-up with healthy-eating advice from 'do-gooders' such as ministers and

charitable organisations. 7 in 10 said the advice on binge drinking and cutting down on salt left them bewildered.

"In this country, food is seen as a burden," says the writer and food campaigner Joanna Blythman. "And, more than that, it's poisoning you, too. We are in a state of paralysis. We don't need more information about what's wrong with food; we need to find out what's right about it."

The supermarkets and national retailers will be putting their diet products at the forefront of displays all through January. Customers will be able to opt for the newly branded slimming bars, shakes, tonics and meal replacements, which all seem to contain an awful lot of E numbers. It is ridiculous to think that we spend £3bn on fast food and £3.6bn on chocolate a year and then fork out £2bn on diet products.

The best way to help customers through the confusing quick fix diet products is to showcase the genuinely healthy natural produce and tasty options available. Beautiful displays of seasonal fruit and vegetables, herbal teas, freshly ground spices, lentils, beans and great non-alcoholic drinks. Independent retailers can help with recipes and menu suggestions for life affirming soups, stews and warming family meals. This means that instead of being faced with an unwholesome powdered meal replacement which is impossible to stick with over time, instead we can open the fridge or larder and be genuinely excited by the healthy possibilities open to us.

Sue Nelson presents the FoodTalk Show with Holly Shackleton foodtalk.co.uk

UK shoppers demand less plastic packaging

Research conducted by retail app Ubamarket across a sample of 2,003 UK adults has found that 82% of shoppers believe the level of plastic packaging on food and drink products needs to be changed drastically.

77% of British consumers also feel that manufacturers and supermarkets are causing the most plastic pollution.

Will Broome, CEO and founder of Ubamarket, commented, "New forms of plastics and packaging, along with the right education, if adopted by retailers, will help cement the UK as a driving force in sustainability and reduce our single-use reliance drastically in the coming years."

Industry reacts to BBC documentary

A BBC documentary *Meat: A Threat to Our Planet?* has provoked plenty of reaction from the farming industry. The programme investigated how meat production, including on a large scale in the US, impacts on the environment.

The four UK farming union presidents – NFU President Minette Batters, NFU Cymru President John Davies, NFU Scotland President Andrew McCornick and UFU President Ivor Ferguson – responded to the documentary, commenting, "At no point did the documentary explain the vast differences between American meat production and UK production. This was a massive oversight considering the BBC's audience and would have left people with the impression that all meat is produced in the same way.

"Simply showing the

environmental impact of beef production in North and South America does nothing to help people make informed choices about food which can be grown and reared in ways that offer benefits for the environment. For example, with the UK's climate, landscape and grass-based systems we have the means, and the ambition, to provide quality, nutritious meat in ways that not only protect the environment, but help mitigate the world's impact on the climate.

"The documentary did, however, demonstrate the concerns UK farming has about future trade, and what we could expect to see on our supermarket shelves if the government were to allow food into the country which has been produced in ways that would be illegal here."

The Cress Co. launches new online platform: Market Place

Distributor The Cress Co. has created a new online platform for food and drink producers called The Cress Co. Market Place.

Last March saw the launch of sister company Route2, "a platform for fine food and drink producers to sell their products, whilst maintaining a level of brand control". In November the distributor integrated Route2 into The Cress Co. website, relaunching it as the Market Place.

This new platform gives retailers access to products outside of the printed catalogue, with no need for a separate account, and low minimum orders. New ranges are expected to be added to the Market Place monthly.

"WE WILL NEED
140,000 NEW
RECRUITS BY
2024 TO FEED
AN EXPECTED
POPULATION OF
70M PEOPLE &
MEET **MARKET**
DEMANDS"

SOURCE: FDF FOOD AND DRINK
INDUSTRY REPORT 2020

ORGANIC, AWARD-WINNING, SINGLE-ESTATE EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Connoisseurs of olive oil will delight in tasting the exceptional organic extra virgin olive oil from La Bandiera. The delicious olive oil is produced in the traditional wine growing area of Bolgheri on the Tuscan coast — home of the super Tuscan vineyards of Ornellaia and Sassicaia.

The team at La Bandiera continues to use the traditional methods of selecting the best time to harvest the olives to ensure the acidity level is low, thereby creating the perfect blend. The result is a smooth yet full-bodied olive oil, endorsed by the IGP in recognition of its quality and origin.

A recent winner in the 2019 Great Taste Awards, La Bandiera olive oil is available for delivery. Please visit labandieraoliveoil.com for details.



While every country has its market culture, Spain's is second to none. Worlds apart from the UK's traditional food market scene – which has seen dwindling visitor numbers following the advent of the out-of-town supermarket and chain retailers on every corner – the Spanish market sector brings together the old and new, heritage and innovation, to the delight of natives and tourists alike.

Barcelona's Santa Catarina Market, built on the foundations of an ancient nunnery and still circled by its original walls, is a case in point. The centuries-old space combines the traditional and modern in perfect balance; independent and family-run food and drink retailers – from fishmongers to greengrocers, cheesemongers and food-to-go providers, some of which have histories dating back through the generations – share the building with a popular restaurant as well as a supermarket conveniently located in a corner spot.

This may seem against the grain to the UK market, where independents make a concerted effort to set themselves apart from the often all-encompassing multiples, but in Spain it is seen as a natural marriage. Within the pages of *Speciality Food*, you'll often find advice from those in the know about how to become a destination retailer. A piece of advice often given is to be a one-stop-shop; to offer shoppers everything they could need (within reason) in order to maximise the time they spend within your establishment, and to avoid the necessity for them to travel elsewhere to tick x, y and z off their shopping list. This is why the co-location of a small-scale chain supermarket and independent retailers makes sense – by offering shoppers a place to purchase their toothpaste and washing up liquid, for example, directly next to an independently-run counter offering fine olive oils, deli products, cheeses and Spanish delicacies, the Spanish market model is satisfying the consumer need for both quality and convenience under one roof. Thanks to clearly defined specialisms, competition isn't an issue.

Assisting this is the Spanish habit of purchasing their fresh produce at markets over and above



MARKET CULTURE

The joys of market shopping play an important role in the Spanish food and drink industry

the supermarket; this is often seen as a luxury, potentially an inconvenient one, for Britain's time-strapped shoppers, but in Spain the food culture is such that market-shopping is part of day-to-day life. In Barcelona, for example, each neighbourhood can have a handful of markets in order to cater to its numerous local residents. That's not to say that convenience and commerce are ranked above culture and heritage. In fact, the developers of another site positioned nearby which was destined to be a market – El Born – altered their plans when

refurbishment work uncovered the impressive remains of ancient buildings in the ground underneath the site. Now, El Born plays host to a cultural centre, where this meeting of history and the modern-day city are celebrated.

The physical markets themselves are also a well-balanced consideration in Spanish society. While the buildings housing the markets are looked after by the local or city councils – allowing for investment in refurbishment when needed – the retail establishments within are thoroughly independent.

The kind of investment these places see is often very impressive, which clearly represents the value they are seen to hold in Spanish culture. The refurbishment of the roof of Santa Catarina market, for example, was completed in 2005 having been designed by renowned architects Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue to be seen from the air; an eye-catching colour and undulating feat of design and engineering which has thoroughly put this thoroughfare on the culinary map. Not bad for a market first opened in 1845 to cater for the

“The market format is truly integral to Spain's culinary world, and the UK could and should take inspiration from the multi-sensory experience it offers locals and visitors alike”

In partnership with

Alimentaria

20-23rd April 2020
Barcelona

working class residents of the local area.

While markets play a vital role in the culinary lives of the Spanish population, they also form a must-visit item on the itinerary of any visitor to the country. No wonder; the vibrancy of Spain's food and drink culture is evident before one steps foot into the market itself. Crowds of locals surround its entrance; the sound of sellers bartering with customers can be heard from the street; and the hum of food lovers experiencing familiar produce and new-found favourites while traversing its pathways can be sensed from outside its boundaries.

Another brilliant example of a Spanish market located in Barcelona is Mercado La Boqueria, which has become a tourist haven thanks to its perfect exemplification of market culture in Spain. Just a moment's walk from Barcelona's most famous shopping street, La Rambla, La Boqueria is perhaps the most vibrant market of them all thanks to its popularity. Throngs of shoppers – both locals after their day-to-day fare and visitors who have travelled from around the world to seek out a new culinary favourite – merge in this huge space, and the energy is palpable.

The Spanish market is more than simply a place at which to purchase food and drink; it's a microcosm of Spanish culinary culture. This journalist's experience of Spanish food and drink culture, enjoyed as part of an exploratory trip with the Alimentaria (one of the world's top food, drink and foodservice trade shows) team, is that time spent exploring the markets of Spain – experiencing the sights, sounds and smells in-person – is the perfect way to immerse oneself in the country's food culture. The market format is truly integral to Spain's culinary world, and the UK could and should take inspiration from the multi-sensory experience it offers locals and visitors alike.

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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up



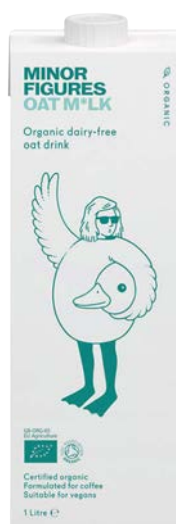
Healthy snack brand adds Salt & Vinegar flavour

BEPPS has added a Salt & Vinegar flavour variant to its range of snack products. The brand's combination of black eyed peas and fava beans has been reformulated to make the puffs richer in vitamin A and calcium, lower in fat and calories and higher in fibre. Not only that, these snacks are 100% natural, vegan friendly, gluten-free, packed with protein and contain no artificial additives or preservatives. The packaging has also undergone a redesign. Founder Eve Yankah said, "We're really excited to be launching the newly formulated range and can't wait to see it hitting the shelves later this month. The new Salt & Vinegar flavour packs a real punch, and we think this fresh twist on a flavour favourite will help the brand appeal to a more mainstream audience. Black eyed peas will always be our 'hero' ingredient, but as our product portfolio grows you will see us mixing in other grains, peas and pulses into our impulse snack range, starting with the puffs which now include Fava Beans." beppssnacks.com

New Organic Oat M*lk now on sale

East London-based Minor Figures has brought its **vegan Organic Oat M*lk** onto the market. Containing only 100% organic ingredients and accredited by the Soil Association, this product is designed to produce the same level of frothy coffees desired by baristas but as a plant-based alternative.

Co-founder Stuart Forsyth said, "Our eco-friendly Organic Oat M*lk has been designed specifically to be the perfect complement to your coffee. Given our background in specialty coffee we wanted to design and develop a product that would allow baristas to easily enhance their customers' coffee drinking experience." minorfigures.com



Hot fill recyclable pouch packaging rolled out

Gourmet gravies in new recyclable packaging have been launched by **Atkins & Potts brand, Inspired Dining**. The five-strong range of gravies include: Beef Gravy with horseradish; Lamb Gravy with Mint; Chicken Gravy with Cranberry & Ruby Port; Vegan Wild Mushroom Gravy and Vegan Red Onion Gravy.

Atkins & Potts worked with packaging specialist SP Group with the testing of the 100% recycled material, and has also announced that its own-brand pouches will be rolled out in the packaging in 2020. Co-owner Nicola Young said, "As a

food producer we are acutely aware of the amount of packaging waste generated by our sector, especially pouch packaging. Finding a 100% recyclable pouch packaging solution has been a priority for us. We have invested our time and resources into working with SP Group to help reduce the amount of packaging waste which goes into landfill. It has involved production trials and extensive testing to finally have this environmentally friendly packaging solution which we are now starting to use across our brands." atkinsandpotts.co.uk

All-natural soft drinks start-up enters the market

Artisan soft drinks startup **Tame & Wild** has entered its all-natural drinks made using English fruits and foraged botanicals into the market. The three-strong range features Strawberry Cucumber and Lime Flower, Blueberry Dandelion & Lavender and Rhubarb Elderberry Rose. Managing director and founder Annabel Makin-Jones said, "Non-alcoholic drink options are a bit limited and I longed for something a bit more sophisticated and celebratory than a glass of orange juice in the pub. Just because we're not drinking alcohol, doesn't mean we don't want something delicious and a bit more special, so I set to developing a range of natural drinks that can be drunk on their own or a mixer, inspired by the flavours of the English Countryside." tameandwilddrinks.co.uk



The absolute bonus, as we've limited the sugar, is the drinks come in under 30 calories, but these are too delicious and natural to be labelled as 'diet drinks'."

Tea-infused gin takes to the shelves

Cartwright & Butler has introduced what it says is the **UK's first tea-infused gin product**. The brand teamed up with fellow Yorkshire-based company, distillery Divine Gin, to create the Darjeeling Infused Parlour Gin. Made using Cartwright & Butler's own Darjeeling tea and Acacia honey, the gin also features a blend of 11 botanicals – including juniper, coriander and cassia – as well as pure spring water sourced from Shepley. Nigel Arnett, national sales director at Cartwright & Butler, said, "Our customers remain loyal to us because of the guarantee of unbeatable, delicious, high quality products – and the Darjeeling Infused Parlours Gin will certainly not disappoint. Our company's continuous growth and success comes purely from our passion to make everyday moments special and add a touch of luxury to every occasion. We're incredibly excited about the new launch, and expect the Gin to be a huge hit with spirit lovers." cartwrightandbutler.co.uk



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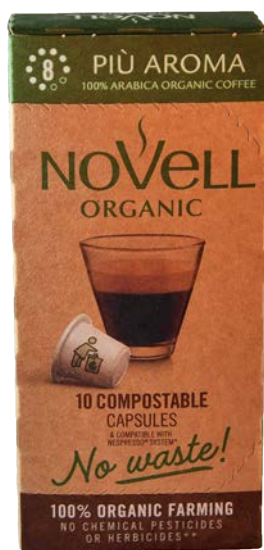
Craft brewer unveils new IPA



New to craft brewer Brick Brewery's Foundation range is Peckham Session. The 4.2% ABV Session IPA is tapping into demand for flavourful but lower alcohol options. The beverage uses a combination of hops: Citra, Ekuanot and new season Simcoe to bring out tropical fruit and citrus notes as well as a classic, resinous US hop character.

Ian Stewart, founder of Brick Brewery said, "We weren't going to add just any beer to our Foundation range, it needed to be special. Peckham Session is a brilliant addition, it's brimming with personality but has a laid-back structure. A light and easy-going session-strength but with all the characteristics of hop-forward IPA and then some. Packed with stone fruit, tropical and citrus aromas and flavours, we're chuffed with the result. This is a beer you'd catch the team

enjoying after a long day in the brewery, which must stand for something!" brickbrewery.co.uk



Family-owned company releases fully compostable, 100% organic coffee capsules

Coffee roaster Cafés Novell has just released its No Waste line of coffee capsules. The capsules are fully compostable and 100% organic, and the new design has meant that the amount of cardboard used in the packaging has been reduced by 45%.

In addition to launching the new No Waste line, three new varieties of coffee have been added: Più Aroma, Cremoso and Ristretto.

CEO Josep Novell said, "Since we started our project more than two years ago with the first compostable capsule on the market, we have strived to get the perfect capsule: 100% compostable, 100% certified organic and 100% waterproof, maintaining the better conditions and qualities of coffee. The range provides a sustainable way for consumers to enjoy high-quality coffee while also reducing their environmental impact." novellcoffee.co.uk

SolDiMar brings acorn-fed 100% Iberico Ham to the UK

SolDiMar has partnered with OVIPOR, the Cooperative of Stockbreeders from Huelva in Andalusia, to bring their exclusive range of acorn-fed 100% Iberico Ham and cured meats including 100% Iberico Bellota Chorizo, salchichon, lomo and black pudding to the UK.

SolDiMAR founder Isabel Sitz said, "Our aim is to bring to the UK the highest quality, sustainable and reliable supply of acorn-fed 100% Iberico products directly from the best artisans in Andalusia. We are extremely proud to have partnered exclusively with OVIPOR. Founded in 1981 and with 848 active members, OVIPOR is the Cooperative of Stockbreeders from Huelva, cradle of pure Iberian acorn-fed pigs in Spain. OVIPOR controls the excellence of all their products with demanding quality standards."



All the production is carried out locally to safeguard its quality. With a century old tradition we are proud to bring to the UK the authentic flavour of pure Iberico acorn-fed ham and cured meats with all its quality and provenance guaranteed." soldimar.com



Seaweed Crisps launch in three flavours

Healthy snacks company Abakus Foods has unveiled a range of Seaweed Crisps in three flavours: Lightly Salted, Salt & Vinegar and Cheese. Made from seaweed harvested from the seas of South Korea, the crisps are then coated with a thin layer of tapioca for extra crunch. The snacks are also gluten-free, vegan and are around 100 calories per bag.

Abakus Foods founder and director, Helen Wang, said,

"We created this range out of our love for nutritious seaweed. Feedback has been amazing and people keep coming back for more. Being a natural foods brand, we embrace the wholesome, delicious and nutritious foods that nature provides us with. And we are honoured to be collaborating with '1% For The Planet Program' to give back to the planet and donate 1% of sales to environmental causes." abakusfoods.com

Triple award-winning rum enters the sector

An exciting new launch into the spirit market is the triple award-winning Equiano Rum, which brings together two cultures, islands and distilleries to create the premium dark rum.

A blend of tropically aged molasses rums from Bajan producer Foursquare with liquid distilled at Gray's Distillery in Mauritius, the result is a spirit with no additives, added sugar, spices or colourants. The Afro-Caribbean rum delivers a tropical taste alongside notes of dried fruit, toffee, butterscotch and caramel. A percentage of profits from every bottle sold will also be going to a equality-focused charity each year.

Richard Seale of Foursquare commented, "Equiano is a first for a centuries-old craft; we have created an entirely unique blend through a collaboration between two rum distilleries on two different continents." equianorum.com



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Also available: Raspberry Champagne, Hazelnut, Espresso, Champagne and Salted Caramel.

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TOP DRAWER S/S 2020

Design is at the heart of this must-visit event, being held at Olympia London 12th-14th January

As the first show of the year, Top Drawer S/S20 promises to bring a bold start to the new decade with a campaign and ethos that focuses on the very thing that connects its community. Live Design illustrates the elements that make the iconic show about so much more than just buying and selling, but also a place that stimulates the sharing of ideas and experiences.

Show director, Alejandra Campos explains, "Passion for design is at the very heart of our DNA and shared by everyone who is part of Top Drawer – from retailers, exhibitors and designers to our curators, speakers and organising team. The 2020 Live Design campaign captures both the individuality and togetherness of this design community, and celebrates its love and passion for innovation and creativity. As we open the

international calendar, Top Drawer SS20 is the destination for creative buyers to source the newest products from the very best design-led brands and new names – and to discover the latest trends and be inspired with our unique show content and features."

Those familiar with the show will know that its Food Emporium has gone from strength to strength since its launch, bringing a mouthwatering edit of giftable food and drink to every edition of the biannual buying opportunity. A unique opportunity for retailers of every type – from garden centres and food halls to independent cafés and department stores – to discover consumables from the very best artisans and makers to enhance their offering for the new season.

Of her visit to the most recent edition, Vinegar Hill's Beth Austin said, "I don't understand why

buyers wouldn't want to visit Top Drawer. Top Drawer always has a good level of exhibitors and I am never disappointed with them. I am always looking for something new, and I come to Top Drawer to be inspired and to seek new themes and trends. The introduction of the Food Emporium at Top Drawer a few years ago has opened up a different opportunity for our business and it is always interesting to see what we could consider."

With an innovative and diverse selection, the Food Emporium will present products from the finest brands across Confectionery, Oils & Condiments, Beverages and Seasonal Products including Burren Balsamics, Ross & Ross Gifts, Paxton & Whitfield, Hawkshead Relish, The Walnut Tree, Coco Pzazz, Cocoa Chocolate, Joe & Seph's, Man Food, Candyhouse, and Briscoe Jellies, to name just a few.

TIME FOR TEA

The gift of a good brew is easily within reach with ranges from Ahmad Tea, a UK-based family business who draw on the tea blending and tasting experience of four generations, and New English Teas, purveyors of ethical tea bags and gift sets in a variety of styles and flavours. Of course, a tea break

isn't the same without a biscuit, making goodies from the Shortbread House of Edinburgh the perfect complement.

SNACK MASTERS

From sophisticated marshmallows and mints that look as good as they taste to chocolates crafted by one of the world's best and bars inspired by US favourites, the Food Emporium is where visitors will discover sweet treat from the likes of Grown Up Marshmallows, The Gourmet Candy Company, Motif Mints, Costello & Hallerstein and Stateside Treat Emporium.

TOP-NOTCH TIPPLES

Those seeking beverages need to look no further than the Food Emporium's varied range of drinks on display. Gin in a Tin revolutionises product presentation with their distinct tin decanters, whilst Noveltea brings a unique twist to the world of beverages with their tea-infused spirits. Using their beautiful surroundings as inspiration for their flavours and packaging, Ribble Valley presents unmissable bottles of small batch artisan gin.

SEASONED TO PERFECTION

A pinch of something special comes courtesy of some of the finest purveyors of salts and spices, including Spice Kitchen, Anglesey Sea Salt and Halen Môn.

IN DETAIL

WHAT: Top Drawer S/S 2020

WHERE: Olympia London

WHEN: 12th-14th January 2020

WEB: topdrawer.co.uk

TWITTER: @TopDrawerLondon

Keeping the needs of the industry at the heart of the show's evolution, the considered expansion of its curated sectors and seminar programmes, as well as the introduction of more networking opportunities over recent editions have enriched the Top Drawer experience; deepening the connection between buyers and suppliers further than ever before.

Taking place from 12th-14th January at Olympia London and carefully edited by a panel of experts to excite, inspire and, ultimately save buyers time with the knowledge that they will only see the best, Top Drawer S/S20 will showcase 1,500 brands – both established and brand new – across Food Emporium, Gift, Home, Greetings & Stationery, Fashion, Craft, Spotted | Pulse, PLAY and Wellbeing.





SCOTLAND: LAND OF PLENTY

Helen Graves explores the country renowned for its cornucopia of food and drink

Scotland is increasingly recognised for its world-class produce, be it farmed, fished, ripened or distilled. A temperate climate and stunning landscape including crystal clear lochs and fertile pasture lay the foundations for a natural larder rich with wild game, dairy, seafood, fruit and vegetables. As people increasingly seek out artisanal products with fewer food miles, the Scottish food and drink industry is booming, turning over £14.8bn with a 6% increase year-on-year, says Scotland Food & Drink.

WHISKY: A COMBINATION OF SCOTLAND'S MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCES

There's one Scottish product so famous it's sought by aficionados the world over: whisky. According to Rachel McCormack, whisky expert and author of *Chasing the Dram*, "Whisky in Scotland is like heat in Australia – it's everywhere". The first recorded mention of Scotch whisky was found in the Exchequer Rolls of Scotland from 1494 by friar Jon Cor, responsible for distilling at Lindores Abbey in Fife. Now, according to the Scotch Whisky Association, there are 133 operating distilleries, accounting for 70% of Scottish food and drink exports and worth a total of £4.7bn. It's now the third largest industry in the country, "after oil and technology" says McCormack, and is responsible for directly employing "over 10,000 people".

It's often said that whisky combines two of Scotland's most precious resources: crystal clear waters and golden barley and while that is true, many of the flavours present in the final product come from the fermentation, distillation and ageing in oak barrels. So, while whisky doesn't have a 'terroir' as wine does, the production

process varies sufficiently between distilleries to produce a wide range of styles across the five producing regions of Lowland Malt, Highland Malt, Islay, Speyside and Campbeltown.

Producers range in size from global competitors to wee independents. In 2018 the mighty Macallan in Speyside opened a new £140 million distillery and visitor centre, and their single malt now leads markets in prime whisky drinking locations such as Japan and the USA. A stark contrast is Edradour in Pitlochry, one of the smallest distilleries in Scotland, which still produces whisky by hand in small batches using equipment more than a hundred years old.

There's a romantic appeal to whisky which brings to mind Aran knitwear and rolling mists. Rachel McCormack agrees; "I think part of the enjoyment are the stories about how it's made and where. Islay for example holds a real strong place in the imagination of prayed whisky drinkers as a place of pilgrimage and dream, and I think Scotch whisky has a real emotional terroir."

SCOTTISH GIN IS HAVING A MAJOR MOMENT

The distilleries are now branching out, however, with many also producing gin. McCormack rates The Glasgow Distillery highly, saying; "It's a really small independent distillery doing a great job with both

“There are now more than 90 gin distilleries in Scotland”

its recently released whisky and its Makar Gin," she says. "It's got an oak-aged gin which is sublime with some tonic. We now have a few rum distilleries too, like the recently set up Wester in Glasgow."

Sue Aikmen of Adarden Estate Farm Shop agrees that Scottish gin is having a major moment. "The gin that we're selling is really popular and the number of Scottish ones available has gone bananas. We don't have a huge section but we try and have the best that we can. Scottish gin is something that people are really looking for." There are now more than 90 gin distilleries in Scotland, with some, such as Loch Ness Spirits and Badvo Distillery in Perthshire using local botanicals such as Scottish juniper. Simon Yearsley of The Scottish Deli has decided to only stock those which are "distilled where they're produced." He adds, "With such a huge growth of the gin market a lot of people are buying in their grain spirit but for me it's about balance and subtlety of flavours. It's not just about jumping on a trend, it's about saying where do you want to be on that trend."

"THERE ARE **133** OPERATING DISTILLERIES, ACCOUNTING FOR **70% OF SCOTTISH** FOOD AND DRINK **EXPORTS** AND WORTH A TOTAL OF **£4.7BN**"

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PEA GREEN BOAT

1 Pea Green Boat's Fennel & Chilli cheese sablés scooped the coveted Golden Fork Award for the best Scottish product in the 2019 Great Taste Awards. Made using 24 month aged Italian Parmesan and mature Scottish Cheddar, the cheese sablé range includes three fantastic flavours: Original, Cumin and Fennel & Chilli. As well as the Fennel & Chilli's success, the Original and Cumin both won two-star Great Taste Awards. Made in a small artisan bakery in Edinburgh, these delicious morsels are sold in some of the best farm shops and delis across the country, as well as appearing in Fortnum & Mason and Selfridges. peagreenboat.co.uk



ISLAND BAKERY

2 Joe and Dawn Reade have been making Island Bakery organic biscuits on the Isle of Mull for 15 years. Coming in a range of delicious flavours – including the hugely popular Lemon Melts – the range is lovingly made in a premises powered by local renewable energy, including wind and water for electricity and local woodchip from Mull's abundant timber plantations for heating the ovens. This is not only environmentally sustainable, but the gentle heat gives the biscuits a slow, perfect bake. islandbakery.com



DEAN'S

3 Aberdeenshire shortbread bakers Dean's has teamed up with popular Scottish artist Steven Brown to create a range of colourful and contemporary gift tins. Shaking up the old-fashioned image of the traditional shortbread tin, Dean's has replaced the more conventional tartan, stags and Scottie dogs with Steven Brown's iconic multi-coloured designs, creating an eye-catching modernisation of this classic Scottish gift. Dean's first started baking their shortbread in the 1970s, when Helen Dean started baking in her Aberdeenshire kitchen to raise funds for the local pipe band. Today Dean's still bakes its shortbread to Helen's exacting standards, and the brand has grown to become a household name across Scotland and beyond. deans.co.uk



SCOTTISH SEAFOOD IS SOUGHT AFTER BY CHEFS THE WORLD-OVER

If whisky and gin make good use of the crystal clear waters then the Scottish seafood industry literally depends on them. In 2018, Scottish vessels landed 446,000 tonnes of seafood and shellfish with a gross value of £546 million, according to Scottish Government statistics. Salmon, langoustine, mackerel and cod are among the most important catches, and Scottish seafood is now sought after by chefs the world-over.

Both hot and cold smoked fish is popular – methods which were introduced to Scotland by the Scandinavians in the 11th century. The heavenly Arbroath Smokie is a PGI-protected regional speciality first produced by fishwives in Auchmithie, a small fishing village a few miles north of Arbroath on the East coast. Haddock are gutted and salted to draw out moisture and toughen the skin before being smoked over a fire of beech and oak. Eaten warm with butter they are truly one of the world's greatest smoked fish, and Iain R. Spink one of their most famous producers. He inherited the business from his father and has won many awards for his traditionally produced smokies.

Many would consider smoked salmon to be more inherently Scottish, although it was actually brought to the UK by Jewish immigrants in the late 1800s. It just so happened that some of the best salmon came from up North and so the fusion of Scottish fish with London smoking techniques took off. Some of the best in Scotland comes from the crystal clear waters of South Uist. A small island West of Skye, its stunning landscape has not been spoiled by industrial farming

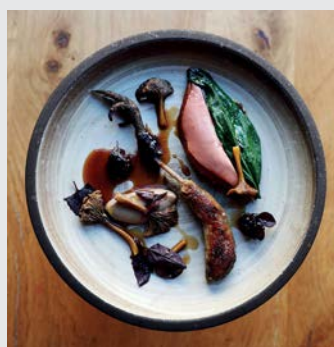
and a close community of producers has formed instead, keeping traditions alive.

At the Hebridean Smokehouse, they draw on their proximity to one of the densest collections of distilleries in Scotland by lightly spritzing the fish with whisky, then using a combination of old and new whisky barrel oak to smoke the fish. This imparts soft, woody flavours and a gentle sweetness, and it's best served with the ubiquitous oatcake, a flat savoury biscuit made from the hardy oat crop, popularised in the 18th century thanks to significant agricultural advancements.

Paul McGlynn runs The Oyster Shed, an independent 'seafood farm shop' on the Isle of Skye, selling oysters that he farms himself, plus smoked fish and seafood sourced from around the local area. "We smoke all the seafood ourselves in a tiny smoker," he says, "so we do salmon, mussels and oysters, which are all very popular. We've just started doing a Talisker smoked salmon because we're right next to the distillery, and we've got other Talisker products too, like a whisky marmalade." It's so important to keep the Scottish identity of products, he explains. "Most of my customers are people on holiday and they want to know it's Scottish. People are concerned about the provenance of food nowadays – they want to know it hasn't travelled for miles." It seems this is true for local people too, with 69% of Scottish people more likely to buy a product if it's labelled as Scottish, according to research conducted by Food & Drink Scotland.

An innovative business, Paul and his partner Zoe are always looking for new ways to expand their product line, and next year plan

CHEF'S PERSPECTIVE...



Chefs are also keen to showcase what Scotland has to share. Chef and restaurateur Peter McKenna opened The Gannet in Glasgow with business partner Ivan Stein six years ago, with the aim of highlighting Scottish produce and wild foods. "At that time we didn't feel there was a voice shouting about the Scottish produce properly here in Glasgow," he says. "There just wasn't enough about provenance."

He couldn't believe that people weren't making use of the incredible wild foods available, including game



birds and deer. "With game, it was pretty dismal when you got to the Glorious Twelfth and there wasn't any game on any menu in Glasgow," he says. "You wouldn't see Mallard, pheasant or partridge and we thought that was sad – Scotland is known throughout the world for its game."

His menu is full of dishes such as Cairngorm red deer with game sausage and wild mushrooms, and – rather controversially for Glasgow – he says, "it is tasting menu only, meaning diners are offered a set menu at a set price. But he feels that people are beginning to take

to take their seafood options in a bold direction with an oyster and lemon sorbet. "Zoe's always coming up with new ideas," Paul explains. "It will be cooked oysters blended with water and lemon before freezing into a sorbet... I think it'll be really popular in the summer."

SCOTLAND IS KNOWN FOR THE QUALITY OF ITS INGREDIENTS

From the land come livestock including pigs, sheep and cows. The most famous meaty export is probably haggis, but one more widely eaten is the black pudding. Stornaway is the place to source them, and puddings produced here have PGI status, obtained after many falsely labelled as Stornaway-produced began to flood the market. The history of black pudding in Scotland lies with crofting, which refers to small communities or townships centred around food production. Crofters kept only small numbers of animals and shared the responsibility for slaughter between them so were very careful not to waste any part. Once all the meat was allocated, the blood and intestines would be made into black puddings.

Scottish beef is also highly prized, with some breeds such as Aberdeen Angus, Highland and Galloway famous around the world for their marbled meat with great depth of flavour. At Ardarden Estate and Farm Shop, Sue Aiken is particularly proud of her Highland cattle. "The provenance of food is really important for us and obviously selling our own meat keeps the food miles as low as possible," she says. "We are known for the quality of our ingredients here in Scotland, and I think the climate helps. We're always going on about the rain, but that's what makes the grass green and then that's what everything feeds on."

Sue finds that visitors to her farm are very interested to learn about the cows, too. "We have a lot of cruise



ships coming in – people from all over the world – and we find they're really excited by the cattle. We take them on a 'Scottish experience' so they go on the trailer to see the cows, the farmer talks to them and then they browse around the shop and have tea and scones – with plenty of Scottish hospitality."

PEOPLE ARE FARMING DIFFERENT BREEDS WHICH ARE ABLE TO COPE BETTER WITH SCOTTISH WEATHER CONDITIONS

Lots of grass for cows means dairy products, too, and it's the quality of that grass which makes for such excellent cheese, says Rory Mellis of I.J Mellis cheesemongers, which specialises in Scottish cheeses. "The grass here is so fertile and nutritious it means the cows produce very creamy milk," he explains.

His biggest sellers are St Andrews Farmhouse Cheddar and Corra Linn, a raw sheep's milk cheese with a savoury, meaty depth and a floral finish. Recently, however, he's seen a big shift in popularity for goats' cheese; "We are seeing people buy a lot more goats' cheeses, and this is a trend that will definitely continue now people are farming different breeds which are able to cope better with the Scottish weather conditions." Elrick Log is his most

more risks. "There is a real buzz in Scotland right now; you've got a lot of young restaurateurs that have opened out on their own. It's not your staid old classics, people are willing to push things further. I think it's very important for a restaurant to say 'this is what's happening in this area at the moment' and be brave."

His ethos is shared by chef Will Verdino of The Taybank pub in Dunkeld. An alumni of St John restaurant in London, known for its nose-to-tail approach to cooking, he's constantly pinching himself at the abundance of ingredients right on his doorstep. "It's like nature's bounty here, so beautiful and so rich; I've never come across a place that just has everything. My boss shoots a lot so he's been bringing back some venison and pheasant, and even just on my way home I know four or five places to stop and pick wild mushrooms." Will and Peter both agree that the amount of open space in Scotland has a lot to do with the thriving ecosystems. "It's the weather, the space, and the fact it's not over populated," says Peter. It seems that the sheer size of Scotland's rural areas are often underestimated.

"IN 2018, **SCOTTISH** VESSELS LANDED **446,000 TONNES OF SEAFOOD** AND **SHELLFISH** WITH A GROSS **VALUE OF £546 MILLION**"

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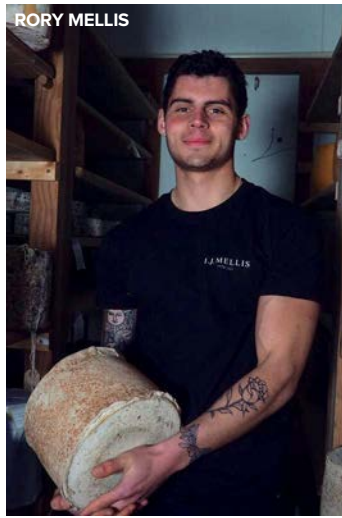


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RORY MELLIS



A SELECTION OF SCOTTISH CHEESES FROM IJ MELLIS

“Rather than a product having to have a bagpipe or tartan on the packet for people to buy it, they buy it because it’s bloody good!”

Rachel McCormack agrees. “In the era of being able to get anything you want from the internet and so much being standardised like McDonalds, people are beginning to seek things out with proper authenticity and some kind of attachment to a specific place,” she says. “Scottish produce is an ideal example of that.”

So with the quality of Scottish products well established, why haven’t they been more visible until recent years? “It’s about when things are found and discovered,” says Simon Yearsley. “A good example here would be the Cairn o’ mhor fruit wines. The Vale of Angus and Perthshire grow incredible numbers of soft fruits, strawberries, redcurrants and blackcurrants and

there have been people making fruit wines for a long time, but it’s probably only in the last five or six years that it’s become really popular. With the growth of social media, visibility has become much higher and we see trends emerging and dropping off more quickly.”

He thinks that this visibility will allow the Scottish brand to go from strength to strength. “I think there is an inherent brand around Scottish speciality food now as a result, and people just know that the vast bulk of it is excellent. So rather than a product having to have a bagpipe or tartan on the packet for people to buy it, they buy it because it’s bloody good!”

really genuine, and I think that’s what Scottishness is. You see it in the supermarkets now too, they’re wanting to be associated with the Scottish brands because it’s all about quality. So I only see it continuing to have success.”

Scotland seems to be providing an opportunity for independent producers and retailers to thrive at a time when so much is uncertain.

Stag
BAKERS SINCE 1885

The Finest Bakery Goods from the Outer Hebrides of Scotland

Based in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, Stag Bakeries has a heritage dating back to 1885 and specialises in producing savoury products of the highest quality.

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4 Situated in the heart of Perthshire, Stewart Tower Dairy makes the finest ice cream in the Highlands. Our cows graze the green grass and clover pastures of Stewart Tower Farm producing quality milk which we use to make our fabulous, award-winning gelato-style ice cream here on the farm. We supply restaurants, hotels, catering and independent retail outlets across the country with a wide variety of flavours and serving options. Please come and see us at Scotland’s Speciality Food Show Stand M51 to see “why it tastes sooooo good”.

stewarttowerdairy.co.uk



STAG BAKERIES

5 Based in the scenic Outer Hebrides of Scotland, Stag Bakeries has a heritage dating back to 1885. The bakery remains family-run to this day and specialises in producing the finest savoury biscuits and snacks. Traditional recipes, time-honoured methods and a team of skilled craft bakers are still at the heart of everything that Stag produces on their premises on the Isle of Lewis, and the result is an award-winning range unmatched for flavour and quality. Stag’s signature product is their Stornoway Water Biscuit, available in a variety of flavours including Seaweed and an excellent accompaniment for cheese, meats, and pâté.

stagbakeries.co.uk



DEERNESS DISTILLERY

6 Embark on a sensory journey with a little spirit thrown in for good measure. Deerness Distillery spirits are a must try if you’re looking for an exclusive premium gin or vodka. In 2017 founders Stuart and Adelle Brown opened Orkney’s first new distillery in over



130 years to produce stunning artisan products that have gone on to win multiple awards for their distinctive flavour. Most recently, their Sea Glass Gin was crowned the UK’s best classic gin in the Great British Food Awards 2019, judged by Raymond Blanc. Deerness Distillery also produce Scuttled Gin, a fantastic wintery gin, with subtle cinnamon and pepper spice with undertones of lemon, and the UK’s most northerly distilled vodka, Into the Wild. The distillery off the northern coast of Scotland also boasts a beautiful shop, tours and tastings.

deernessdistillery.com



SCOTLAND'S SPECIALITY FOOD SHOW

Be inspired, be treated and be informed at Glasgow's SEC,
19th-21st January 2020

Kick-start your New Year with the first of all the food trade events at Scotland's Speciality Food Show, which is held in Glasgow from 19th-21st Jan 2020. This annual show is a mecca for fine food and drink, principally from Scotland but complemented by many offerings from the rest of the UK and around the world.

As the only food and drink trade show in Scotland in 2020, the show allows retail and catering outlets to source, taste, feel and see the huge and varied offerings on display from small and large producers. New products and companies will be launched here and new ranges unveiled in what promises to be a very busy and inspiring three days.

With Scotland having seen an influx of overseas tourists in 2019,

many outlets are looking to re-stock for both the tourist and local markets. Scotland is renowned for its high-quality food and drink offerings so it is this show which offers the perfect opportunity to see it all under one roof. Nothing beats the actual face-to-face interaction that visits to trade shows facilitate, where buyers can meet with suppliers, taste the products, check out the packaging and understand if it's something their customers will buy.

Food from the regions

Regional food groups are particularly strong in Scotland and have arrived en masse at Scotland's Speciality Food Show 2020. New for 2020 is Flavours of Fife which will have a huge stand housing some really unusual and delicious offerings from

this region such as Coul Brewing, Lindores Abbey, Rumburra Scotland, Christopher Trotter and Burntisland Fish Co. Food from Argyll will present local delicacies from sea and land while Orkney will return with its stand housing such companies as Orkney Creamery, Orkney Bakery, Orkney Craft Vinegar, J Gow Rum and Jolly's of Orkney. Northern Ireland will again be returning with a



Dumplings, Biggar Gin Co, Ellis Gin, Garbanzo Snacks, Nut Shack, Toffee Shop, Edinburgh Preserves and many more.

On trend this year are delicious soft drinks catering for the increasing number of people who don't drink alcohol, such as the Paisley Drinks Company, Feragaia alcohol-free spirits from Fife, Cushiedoos, Alba Cola and Summerhouse Drinks.

Every fine food outlet and farm shop is well aware of its eco credentials and there is an increase in environmentally friendly products from suppliers such as Ecobags, B Plastic Free and Bumblewraps. All these exhibitors are seeing a spike in sales as retailers seek suitable alternatives.

Launch Gallery

This show aims to inspire with its Launch Gallery – a hotbed of originality and innovation where young producers will showcase their wares, such as Woodmill Game, Badachro Distillery, Smoky Barrel Jerky, Grace Chocolates, The Wee Farm Distillery, Palmerstons Bespoke

large stand, as will Shetland Food and Drink.

New to the Show

Of the 170 exhibitors, over a third are new to the show allowing visitors the chance to source new products. Worth checking out are Pipers Crisps, Joe & Seph's Popcorn, Screaming Chimp Chilli Sauce, Deliquescent, Cloutie McToot Traditional



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Old favourites

One of the major benefits of visiting trade shows is to re-establish relationships with producers and see what they are launching for the year ahead. Nothing beats the ability to taste and see the products which can only be gained by visiting the show. Scotland's Speciality Food Show is a firm favourite for many food producers such as Stewart Tower Dairy, ~Walkers Shortbread, Gordon & Durward, Stahly Quality Foods, Crystals Shortbread, The Chain Bridge Honey Farm, Ross's of Edinburgh, Little Doone Foods, ~Cairn O'Mohr Country Wines, Campbells Shortbread and Gardiners of Scotland.

Key distributors

Food and drink distributors, such as The Cress Company, Clark's Speciality Foods, Glencarse Foods and Greencity Wholefoods, will host large stands with an incredible array of products that will certainly tickle the tastebuds of the many visitors. This show is a 'must visit' for all fine food retailers, delis, farm shops, tourist destinations, cafés, restaurants, hotels and other catering outlets across Scotland and the north of England, as it is the only chance for sourcing products for the retail and food service industry together in one venue. As Sue Montgomery from Ardardan Farm Shop said, "The Scottish Speciality Food & Trade Fair is always a must-do on our calendar as it's a great opportunity to see what's new in the industry, blather with current suppliers and find a few

new jewels to stock in our farm and gift shop. We always say if we get three new products or pointers from a show it is worth going, and at this show we usually get far more than that so it is always worth it."

Improve your skills

The new Talking Shop area adds extra reasons to attend the show, with a range of informative talks and workshops on subjects such as Retail Trends by Fiona Chautard, Social Media Masterclass for Retailers from Tuminds founder Rene Looper, Tips to Attract Tourists, especially the Chinese market from Visit Scotland's Chris Greenwood and Angie Fowler, Cybercrime, Just a Card and more.

There are also some exciting new food awards to be launched at 11am on Mon 20th Jan so not to be missed.

Impress the Nessies

Nessie's Den is returning for its second year. Here emerging producers from the Launch Gallery will showcase their products to the 'Nessies' – well respected experts such as Holly Shackleton, editor of *Speciality Food*, Allan Clark from Clarks Speciality Foods and Anna Mitchell from Castleton Farm Shop – in the mode of the BBC's *Dragon's Den* in an entertaining and exciting session. The Nessies will evaluate the products and give helpful hints on pricing, packaging and commercial appeal. This will take place at 1pm on Tuesday 21st January.

Awarding the best

Central to the show are the Best Product Awards, which have been proven to give the winners' products a real boost in attracting retailers and sales. Judged on the opening morning by industry experts Andrew Firth from Herbie fine food shop in Edinburgh, Jonathan Macdonald,

Ox and Finch owner and head chef, Elaine Shirley from Hopetoun House Farm Shop and Aldi buyer Allan Leslie. Whether a winner or not, these awards let the exhibitors get their products in front of key buyers.

Kim Cameron from The Gin Bothy, a previous winner, added, "It was incredible that we won against such tough competition, and this has given us an added reason to contact our customers and to promote to new ones."

Gary Maclean, Scotland's National Chef who judged at the 2019 show said, "I was really impressed by the new and different products that are made in Scotland. The provenance of the products is important and it's great to see so much from the Highlands and Islands, especially Orkney and Shetland."

As well as the constant food and drink product innovation, the retail offering is becoming more and more sophisticated and experiential at farm and fine food shops as they broaden their appeal. The food and drink offering in cafés are pulling people in and then they are being introduced to a huge range of speciality food and drink at a retail level. In addition, seasonal marketing such as workshops, special offers and talks and workshops on a wide variety of subjects to drive footfall are becoming more commonplace. All of these themes are reflected at the show to assist retailers and make their visit more and more compelling.

Many farm shops and food halls are also seeing a rise in popularity of in-house butchery departments where the shop can provide locally sourced, high quality produce. These small concessions, cafés or even gift departments within larger farm shops can provide an extra reason for customers to come in and shop. This show has many fresh meat and

IN DETAIL

WHAT: Scotland's Speciality Food Show
WHERE: SEC, Glasgow
WHEN: 19th-21st January 2020
WEB: scotlandsspecialityfoodshow.com
TWITTER: @SSFooshow

cheese exhibitors so it is vital to attend to source new products.

Trading up

Scotland's Speciality Food Show is run in conjunction with Scotland's Trade Fair, where about 500 gift, homewares, craft, jewellery, fashion accessories, clothing and textile producers will be on display, allowing buyers a 'one-stop' buying platform.

Networking day and night

Scotland's Speciality Food Show is more than just a show. It is a social hub with plenty of networking opportunities, be it around the Best Product Award areas, or by making use of special show discounts in local eateries after the show. For many it's a chance to see what the competition is doing and take in the sights and flavours of Glasgow.

Show director Mark Saunders adds, "The aim of this food show is to ensure we are a one-stop show for all independent retailers, both food and gifts, in Scotland and northern England. Here they can be inspired, place orders and ensure they are ahead of the game for the coming season."

Perfect venue

Held at the SEC, in the centre of Glasgow, it is easy to access from motorway, train and airport with many large hotels close by. One large hall housing both Shows in a clear grid layout makes for a very enjoyable visitor experience.

“The aim of this food show is to ensure we are a one-stop show for all independent retailers, both food and gifts, in Scotland and northern England. Here they can be inspired, place orders and ensure they are ahead of the game for the coming season”



Scotland's Speciality Food Show

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19-21 January 2020
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timsdairy.co.uk

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field-fare.com



4 DARNLEY'S SPICED GIN

Distilled with 10 warming botanicals including cinnamon, ginger and Grains of Paradise, an exotic African pepper. These flavours work in a Red Snapper cocktail, the gin equivalent of the Bloody Mary. Replacing vodka with this spicy gin and adding orange juice and lime gives this brunch favourite a twist. darnleysgin.com

5 TAYLORS OF HARROGATE YORKSHIRE GOLD

This is Yorkshire Tea's finest blend. They choose teas from their three favourite origins – Assam, Kenya and Rwanda – and buy them from the top ten tea gardens in the world to make a rich, smooth and incredibly satisfying brew. yorkshiretea.co.uk

6 CHERRY TREE PRESERVES

The award-winning range of preserves, marmalades and curds are lovingly made in the West Country using only the finest ingredients. Handmade in stirrable batches, and steam cooked quickly to preserve the vibrant colours, textures and flavours of nature. cherrytreepreserves.co.uk

7 MA BAKER GIANT FLAPJACKS

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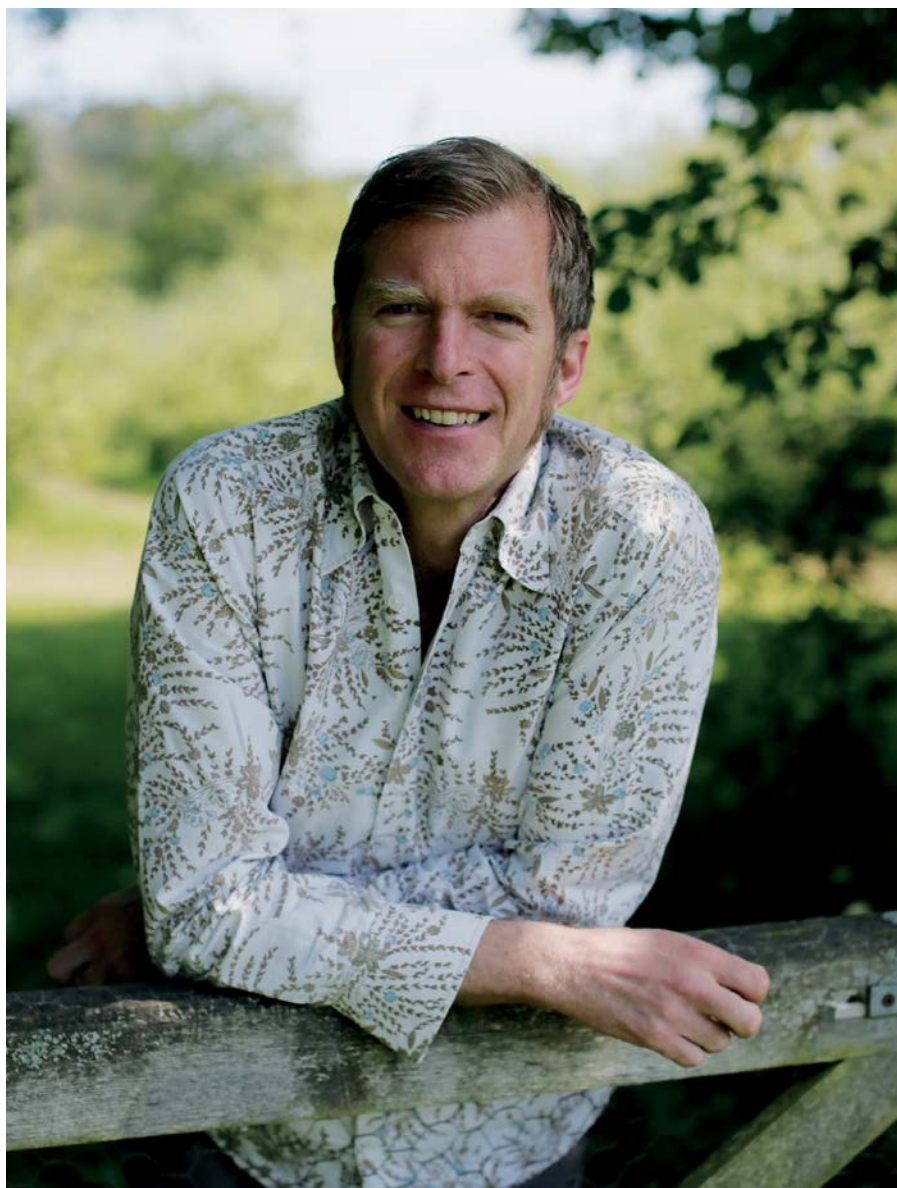
Aspall was founded in 1728 by my great great great great grandfather, and it was a racing certainty sort of thing – the opportunity was there and available if my brother and I wanted it. I was at Oxford Polytechnic for four years, doing a sandwich course and worked at The Old Truman's Brewery in London, then went off travelling for a few years, during which time I worked in bars in Hong Kong for a while. The last thing I was doing before I came back was driving an old Enfield around India; it wasn't exactly industry training, but it was a certain type of training and I came back long of beard and hair.

There was no obligation for my brother and I to work for the family business; my parents very explicitly told us that if we wanted to go off and do something else we could and should. That was probably the reason why we ended up deciding to come back. It was like some kind of reverse psychology – which I'm sure my parents didn't plan – if you aren't forced to do something you look at it with different eyes, and see the positive reasons for doing something rather than the reasons why you wouldn't want to. It became our decision to come back, and so when there were tough times – which there always are – there was no resentment because we weren't being forced to do something that we didn't want to do.

When I first joined Aspall in 1993 it was relatively small, turning over around four million pounds a year, but after we relaunched our cider in 1999 it grew rapidly and required increase amounts of investment. Our aspiration was always for the good work to be carried on and for good cider to be continued to be made under the Aspall name, and Molson Coors put a proposal together that satisfied all those things. We didn't walk away, and are still involved in the business – it's still something for the family to be proud of, and the heritage and reputation has maintained its value. They've certainly put their money where their mouth is.

I use Aspall's cider vinegar in Nonsuch Shrubs, but apart from that – and me – there's no link between it and my new business. It started about 12 or 13 years ago when my wife encouraged me to stop drinking, and what shocked me was how strongly I was protesting. I was saying that I don't have a drinking problem, I don't have blackouts or wake up in shop doorways or drink at breakfast. The next year I was to become the chairman of the National Association of Cider Makers, and alcohol was beginning to get a bit of flack for being a scourge in society; we were all wondering if it would 'become the next tobacco'. I felt that if I was going to stand in front of ministers and state that there's no such thing as problem drinks, only problem drinkers, I needed to make sure that I wasn't one myself. I decided that if I couldn't buy an interesting alternative to alcohol I'd make it myself.

I'd always known about the summer refreshers made by the Victorians and that's



VIEWPOINT: HENRY CHEVALLIER-GUILD

Heritage family business accumen meets start-up excitement in Henry Chevallier-Guild's CV

where I started, using other people's cordials, then started making the cordials myself using any fruit, any veg and turning it into a shrub. It was all for home consumption and I didn't have any plans for it. Dinner party guests suggested I market it, but I responded that there wasn't a big enough demand, and that I didn't know how to define it. There also wasn't a big consumer demand for non-alcoholic

drinks around this time, eight or nine years ago, so I shelved it. Three or four years ago it was time to pull the idea back out of the cupboard. I originally looked to launch it as an Aspall product, but it needs quite a lot of explaining and education, and a soft glove sell – if it had been launched by Aspall it would have been an element in the offer to big pub companies and supermarkets, and

would have become about price instead of exploration and enjoyment.

Now that Nonsuch Shrubs is on the market, I'm reminded an awful lot of when I joined Aspall in 1993 – we did everything ourselves. Not quite to the same extent as I am now; I'm vacuuming the carpet and everything! This journey is scary in a way because I've left the comfort of an established, successful business, but I know enough people in the industry so that it's not entirely a frightening prospect; I can call people up and put an idea to them. It's a hugely privileged position, and so this isn't a start-up in the truest sense of the word as I know the ropes. This doesn't make it any easier to sell, but I've never been scared of putting in the long hours needed. There's a lot of nervous energy within a start-up – it's exciting, it's exhilarating – change is scary but good at the same time. It's hard work but extremely rewarding.

I might be a bit long in the tooth for this; maybe I should be hanging my hat up and offering consultation. The idea of doing shows at weekends and losing your leisure time isn't as readily accepted as it was 20 or 30 years ago, as your priorities shift the older you get. I look around at younger entrepreneurs and see the naivety, time and energy wasted spent going down blind alleys – I'm still going down them, by the way! – but even with experience there's a consistent pull and draw. We're getting a good foothold in the market now and beginning to get more repeat purchases, but there are still a lot of highs and lows – they're just not as high or low as they used to be.

TALKING POINTS

SHRUBS

Shrubs are the drink that won't go away. They've been around for 5,000 years. The Babylonians made them, Romans made them, the Ottoman Turks made them, and American Colonials and Medieval sailors did too. There's something about them that we keep going back to – bittersweet, sour, savoury – these are things that tantalise us. They're moreish and we like them. Shrubs have all of this in buckets, so I feel confident that we've backed the right vehicle as they are so versatile, delicious and adaptable. They've got a great back story, too – they're a very authentic thing, and one of the best kept secrets in the drinks industry (but not for long!).

NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

The market's good; there's a lot of misinformation in it and lots of people are jumping into the market thinking that they need to tick this box. They're formulating a landscape as they see it but I don't think that's necessarily the landscape that's in front of them. I've been speaking with retailers who are unsure about what it is and where it sits and who's drinking it, as it's very fast moving and evolving all the time. It's good fun being in markets like this.

“ I look around at younger entrepreneurs and see the naivety, time and energy wasted going down blind alleys. I still go down them myself; even with experience there's a constant pull and draw ”

MAKING IT WORK

Large businesses work in certain ways; Aspall is very fleet of foot compared to a lot of big companies, but it still has a hierarchy and things need to be done in a certain way. You can revitalise that and infuse the right kind of energy, but you're working within a bigger team. Something I'm enjoying about doing Nonsuch is taking a look at the details that I never got involved with at Aspall, because

there was someone else doing that job. I'm relishing filling in the gaps from my previous existence. It was so satisfying taking a product like Aspall to market, seeing the look on people's faces and knowing they love what you're doing.

What gets me out of bed in the morning – with a spring in my step – is knowing there's so much to do! Setting goals and objectives and adapting when you don't hit them is satisfying, as is being totally flexible to be

able to offer a bespoke service to lots of people. I'm spinning a lot of plates but it's good fun!

Big business can learn a lot from start-ups. When a company becomes a certain size it has to have systems in place to make sure that it does the things it does well and doesn't make mistakes. When you're a small company, there's less to go wrong as far as that's concerned so you can move a lot quicker. There's always the aspiration for

big companies to be less bureaucratic, to be fleet of foot and faster, but in reality the roles of HACCP and quality assurance and Trading Standards mean that a lot more people have to be involved in the conversation and it takes a lot longer for things to get to the start line. It's unavoidable and doesn't make big companies bad, but the ability to turn things around quickly is one of the things that I appreciate about being in a much smaller business.

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QUALITY FAST FOOD

Takeaway is booming, says Sally-Jayne Wright. Which means more competition than ever for indie retailers

Did somebody say Just Eat? If you haven't heard this jingle, you haven't been paying attention. The food-to-go sector is growing at almost twice the rate of the overall economy, much of it driven by younger urban consumers' desire for convenience. Takeaways now account for 15% of consumer spending on food with the total spend in 2018 £12.5 billion, up from £10.6 billion in 2015.

I RUN A DELI, NOT A FRIED CHICKEN SHOP. WHY SHOULD I CARE?

If an office worker uses their Deliveroo for Business company allowance to order a lunch delivery, that's money they're not spending with you.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE TAKEAWAY TREND?

Clever marketing to convince us we're time-poor. Plus the decline of several casual dining chains such as Jamie's Italian which has boosted demand. Consumers have discovered the addictive luxury of having a Vietnamese noodle soup – or even toast and Marmite – delivered to their desk or doorstep. Over half of home delivery and takeaway orders are placed online.

AND WHAT'S THE TREND WITHIN THE TREND?

Healthy convenience. Consumers are increasingly demanding higher quality ingredients aligned with their dietary preferences (Euromonitor). The restaurant chain Leon was ahead of the trend when it launched in 2004 offering the kind of healthy fast food people wanted to make themselves – wholegrain rice with no waiting half an hour while it cooked, lentils (ditto), homemade baked beans, quality

meatballs and burgers. Geared up for allergies and special diets, Leon allowed everyone to get their fast food fix.

WHO ARE THE MAIN DELIVERY PLAYERS?

In addition to large platforms like Just Eat, Takeaway.com and Deliveroo, there are Uber Eats, Feast and countless local and regional initiatives. London is the UK's takeaway capital.

ARE 'DARK KITCHENS' KITCHENS WITHOUT WINDOWS?

Pioneered by Deliveroo in spring 2017 under the name Dark Editions, dark kitchens are industrial units where food of a particular kind, say Korean, is cooked. They are not restaurants and don't take guests. They allow a delivery company to provide a certain style of cooking in an area where they have identified demand but no restaurants of that type.

IF OUR DELI IS LOSING LUNCHTIME TRADE BECAUSE WE CAN'T DELIVER, SHOULD WE SIGN UP WITH UBER EATS OR SIMILAR?

Only if you can afford up to 30% commission. Our off-the-record interviewees hinted that even if turnover looks attractive, it can be hard to work out if you're actually making money once you factor in delivery costs, discounts and returns. John Warren, buyer at Partridges said, "Deliveroo approached us in 2018 as did a number of start-ups. But we have our own delivery van and still rely on local customers. They phone or email through their lunch orders in the morning, we collate them and off we go. No hot food because we would have to ensure the food was delivered piping hot. We're probably missing out on a proportion of customers but it comes down to logistics."

SO SHOULD WE STOP DOING MORTADELLA AND CHEESE AND OFFER BURGERS INSTEAD?

You could offer them in addition. Bayley & Sage deli at London's Parson's Green has a grill outside the shop where a different hot takeaway is served every day. Lunches cost £6 and include chicken Caesar wrap, falafels and beef burgers with blue cheese. Manager Paulie Cruz said, "We started offering takeaways in summer and it was so successful we now do them all year round."

“ Consumers have discovered the addictive luxury of having a Vietnamese noodle soup – or even toast and Marmite – delivered to their desk or doorstep ”

WHICH CUISINE IS MOST POPULAR?

Chinese, with Indian second. Vegan meals are the fastest growing choice, with orders rising almost fivefold over the last two years.

ANY OTHER IDEAS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF THE FAST FOOD TREND?

Sales of hot meals increase in winter which means porridge, soup, stew, chilli or vegan katsu curry. Vegan dishes do particularly well in January when many resolve to eat less meat. Don't wait for customers to 'discover' you do hot takeaway. Offer tasters, text customers or have a table outside the shop. Can you copy Deliveroo's company 'allowance' giving a small discount on larger orders?

ANY PRODUCTS WE SHOULD STOCK?

Houmous, vegetable soup and ready meals provide fast healthy lunches for the office fridge or microwave. We like Precious Pea houmous – their bestseller is turmeric with dried fruit – and Cuzena, a houmous made from fava beans. Re-Nourish, a re-heatable soup brand started by a former cardiac nurse, tastes as good as home-made. We also like the ready meals created by Christina Baskerville of Easy Bean.

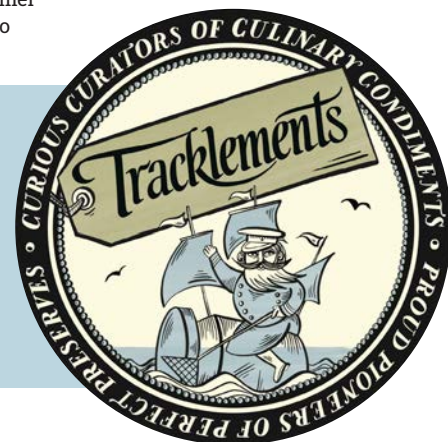
WILL THE HEALTHY FAST FOOD TREND LAST?

Four in 10 takeaway restaurant owners are first-time entrepreneurs (British Takeaway Campaign) and a percentage won't survive. Shortage of chefs is a big challenge. The trend for healthy competition including street food markets and multinationals will continue. Trend Watch's local Marks & Spencer in London's Battersea was refurbished recently and when it reopened, it had an in-store pizza oven and hot chicken to go. That tells you all you need to know.



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CLARE JACKSON, SLATE CHEESE



“Looking forward”

The last two years have been a whirlwind for us here at Slate – establishing the business, getting stuck into cheese retail with the opening of two shops in Suffolk, and launching our website so that customers can have cheese delivered direct to their door throughout mainland Britain. Perhaps 2020 is a moment for a deep breath? Unlikely as we are still bursting with cheese-inspired ideas and ambition to drive the business forward!

With our shops situated in two seaside towns we are keen to see consumer confidence lifted, restoring high streets such as ours in Aldeburgh and Southwold to the heart of vibrant communities with thriving independent businesses and collaborations.

This year we have seen increasing consumer interest in the provenance of the cheese we sell, with a tendency towards smaller quantities of higher quality produce. It is hugely important for us as a team to learn more about the farms and dairies that produce the delicious artisan cheese in our Slate ‘wall of cheese’. During the coming year we will seek opportunities to visit farms and cheesemakers so that we can bring these cheeses alive when talking about them with our customers. We will also continue our work with other local businesses to develop new and exciting cheese-pairing collaborations. This is an area in which we can offer real added value to our customers, helping them to step beyond the traditional cheese and cracker combination to enjoy artisan

cheese to its fullest.

With great anticipation we look forward to the new cheeses we will taste and discover during 2020, and we will continue to source new products of outstanding quality to excite our customers’ taste buds. Mindful of the climate change emergency we will promote local products, particularly those where steps are being taken to increase sustainability in the production process. On farm visits this year we’ve seen innovative energy solutions, from wind turbines to bio-digestors, solar panels and even cow-source heating! Our influence is limited, but supporting artisan producers who incorporate this technology at the heart of their farms and cheesemaking is extremely important to us here at Slate.

Whilst remaining vigilant to offering premium quality and good shelf life, we can also aim to consolidate incoming deliveries to Slate as our location makes us highly dependent on road transport.

In our shops we will seek to build on the steps we have taken to reduce waste, minimise packaging and manage our power consumption. Many of the ‘easy’ swaps have now been made and we are focusing on behavioural change in our team and amongst customers. An example of this is a tiny tweak to the frequently asked question: ‘Would you like a bag?’ – instead enquiring, ‘Do you need a bag?’ Initially this feels against the grain of high quality customer service, but it challenges each customer to think rather than take the easy option.

“We are still bursting with cheese-inspired ideas and ambition to drive the business forward”

MATHEW MARCH-SMITH, PONG



“What to expect in 2020”

We’ve spent the last two years and a lot of energy and capital on setting up and building our monthly cheese subscription programme, The Cheese Club. In 2020, most of our efforts and budgets will go into growing what is now a hugely successful part of the business. We’re determined to grow our subscription base and bring the highest quality cheeses to as many customers as possible. Developing our relationships with producers, discovering new products and ensuring supply commitments are critical to managing a successful subscription programme so our focus throughout the year will be on those key areas.

At the same time, the wait for some sort of movement either way on Brexit, for all of us in food industries, is still a painful and frustrating wait. We receive large weekly shipments from Rungis in Paris, and any amount of delays or worse, tariffs, on this stock would really hurt our margins. Someone along the line will need to pay for the increased cost of European cheese following a departure from the EU, whether that’s the initial producer, the wholesaler, us or the customer. We still feel loyal to all the magnificent cheese producers across the Continent, however, so whatever the situation with the EU we will find a way to stock their wonderful cheeses and include them in our stock listings and subscription boxes.

We have recently become the exclusive online retailer of the new Alex James Co. range of British cheeses. We’re now offering boxes of four or six of his fantastic new cheeses, which are also available individually, along with other merchandise such as clothing and books. We will certainly look to

develop this relationship with the Alex James Co. team through the coming year and hopefully will play a part in the Big Feastival at the end of August. Celebrity endorsements of artisan cheese benefit everyone, and the more that the superb cheeses made in this country are praised in the mainstream media, the better it is for everyone in the industry.

We’ve just celebrated our 10-year anniversary at Pong, and as an online business in the age of the internet, we’ve been around for what feels like a huge proportion of the digital retail era. Personally, I’ve always felt the same about the internet which is, as the adage goes, ‘the more things change the more they stay the same’.

So much of what we did in our very first year we still do, and we do it at the same time of year in the same way. While we’ve honed, refined and streamlined our production processes and have invested and improved our logistical set up, we still have peaks of sales at the same points in the year, we still acquire customers with the same methods, and we still offer the same products – boxes of high quality artisan cheeses, quite a few of which are still the same classics, made with the same methods as 10 years ago. We’ve been able to finesse marketing techniques over the years and gained an amazing understanding of our customers from the technology available now, but ultimately what we’ve really learnt is to not keep making the same mistakes we made early on. As another new year begins I know that while we will hopefully grow in the areas we focus our efforts on and develop some new ones, I’m also aware that a lot of the structure of the year and our customers’ buying patterns will be mainly the same as always.

Cheese Talk

New retail perspectives from industry experts



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PETER'S YARD



MAXIMISING YOUR CHEESE COUNTER

Judy Roberts of Right Product Right Place shares how to start 2020 on the right track

The customer is king. How many times have you heard that expression? Too many to count, I'm sure, but it's amazing how easy it is to lose sight of that mantra when planning layouts for our stores and counters. We all get caught up in making it as simple as possible for us to use as retailers, forgetting to examine quite how effective it will be from our customer's perspective.

Your cheese display can be a really eye-catching and central focus for your store, but you'll need some neat tricks to turn an otherwise cold space full of yellow and white blocks into a vibrant and exciting place to visit, not just once but to keep coming back to.

By adding elements of theatre to your service and layout you will create a display that attracts attention, raises average spend and encourages repeat business.

Add structure

- Create variety in terms of height in your display using blocks beneath your boards or platters.

- Grade height down from the back towards the front of the fridge, ensuring you don't block any chiller ducts, of course, and that the required temperature is maintained.

- Simplify choice by grouping types of cheese together (all the blue ones together, all the goats milk ones together, for instance).

- Cut at least one wedge from new blocks or wheels of cheese and place it on top of the wheel. It's far better from the customer's perspective to see the inside of a cheese, rather than just the outside rind as they can start to understand what its texture will be. This will also encourage

customers to try the product instead of being put off by being first to cause the cheese to be cut.

Add colour and texture

- Platters, boards or tiles of differing colours, for example two or three toning greens, scattered among the display to break up the overall product tone will contrast well with the products and 'warm up' the visual impact of the display.

- Include additional colour contrast tricks such as mini chalkboards or black tickets to name and price the cheeses instead of white labels.

- Add props such as grapes, fresh figs and vine leaves, a few jars of chutney or fruit cheeses dotted about to add visual texture. Fake fruit can be an effective option to avoid waste, but don't overdo it!

Add tasters

- Offer small tasters of new or featured cheeses on your counter – just one or two is plenty.

- Cut small samples of the cheese(s) that customers are considering buying to aid decision-making.

- Include samples of your chutneys and crackers to encourage add-on sales. Ring the changes and make sure the ones you choose to highlight work well with the featured cheese.

Add inspiration

Cheese is just the starting point. Consider how the cheese will be used by your customer and what would make sense to serve with it. Share your expertise generously with your customer and they will keep coming back.

- Arrange packs of crackers, biscuits, chutneys and jellies around the fridge display. Make them easy to see, clearly priced and simple to select. Help customers choose the perfect one for their cheese selection.

- Encourage your producers to give you leaflets and information about the provenance of each of their cheeses.

- Provide tasting notes about the cheeses – either your featured one or perhaps to suit the one your customer chooses.

- Let your customer know what wines would work particularly

well with their choice. Have them available close by or take your customer over to where they can find them. Don't just focus on expensive wines. Far better to opt for a mid-range bottle, to avoid putting some customers off.

So you have your counter all set and your staff geared up to share their expertise, but how do you maintain that visual interest and keep customers coming back?

It's vital to make sure you always have something new to show off and say about your cheese, and there are various routes to get that message out and develop a following. Here are a few ideas:

- Change the layout regularly – changing props to suit the season and adding different splashes of colour in the form of platters and signage.

- Use coloured chalk pen to highlight an offer or idea on the glass-front of the fridge. Red is a great colour to catch the eye. The word NEW and an arrow pointing to a cheese will draw the attention of passers-by.

- A 'cheese of the week' feature, given a central position in the counter, will automatically update the appearance of the counter. Make sure there is space around the featured cheese to allow it to be distinct and literally stand out from the crowd. Use an especially attractive board or platter to 'frame' it and then support it with information about its producers and provenance. Complete the offer with sampling from the counter and with recipe and wine pairing ideas.

- Invite producers to showcase their cheeses, either on a regular pop-up event schedule or as a special for those on your mailing list. These can be combined with a wine-tasting and a competition to win a themed hamper, for instance, creating an exclusive 'cheese lovers club'.

- Create a virtual presence for your cheese counter about all the above on social media. Post regular updates and mouthwatering photos to encourage followers and business.

“ Share your expertise generously with your customer and they will keep coming back ”



PETER'S YARD

The natural choice for cheese

specialityfoodmagazine.com



New retail perspectives from industry experts

American cheeses make their mark in UK industry

The reputation of American cheeses has developed significantly in recent times, with produce from the country grabbing attention at various awards. Recently an American cheese scooped the top accolade for the first time at the World Cheese Awards. Rogue River Blue, created by Rogue Creamery in Oregon, took the crown at the event which saw a record-breaking 3,804 cheeses from 42 countries being judged.

The 260-strong judging team included Mary Quicke of Devon-based cheesemaker Quicke's, whose own cheeses landed a Gold and three Silver honours at the awards.

Mary commented, "American cheese has changed out of all recognition. Of course you can still find plenty of dull cheese in hamburgers, cheese slices, cold pack (don't ask). At the top end, though, there is some extraordinary cheese. When I first started judging cheese in the States nine years ago, there were four cheeses I thought arrogantly. 'Bless, they are beginning to get the hang of this'. This year when I judged, there was world-class cheese after world-class cheese. The artisan cheese world is well supported by the American Cheese Society who run the Judging and Competition which gives great feedback, their Certified Cheese Professional Program (which inspired our Academy of Cheese) and also by an academic establishment keen to elevate American cheese."

The accolades don't stop there, as at the International Cheese & Dairy Awards in Nantwich 2019, Cellars at Jasper Hill in Vermont won the Reserve Supreme Champion prize, which saw judges cast their votes on over 5,000 different cheeses.

Sarah Stewart, a director at Neal's Yard Dairy says, "I don't believe there is specifically more interest in American cheese [than before], we did get a number of enquires about Rogue River Blue after the World Cheese Awards but we also got a number of enquires about Pitchfork, a Cheddar made by the Trethowan's in Somerset that did very well at the World Cheese Awards too. Probably what has changed in the last decade or so is the quality of what is being produced by some of the cheesemakers in the US, and they are quite rightly getting recognition for that. Producers like Uplands, Jasper Hill and Rogue River, for example. Being present at events such as the Slow Food Cheese in Bra, Italy is helping to introduce the public outside the US to those cheeses. And lastly, the Fine Cheese Company who is coordinating the import of these specialist American Cheeses into the UK means that people interested in trying them can actually get hold of them now."

“Of course you can still find plenty of dull American cheese, but at the top end there are some extraordinary products”

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L-R: RICHARD DARBISHIRE, BOB BIGLEY, 'PAMELA', WILL ALDERSON FROM ATLEY HILL RAW MILK AND BENGT ODNER

Entrepreneurs acquire Swaledale Cheese

A group of three entrepreneurs have acquired the UK's only producer of Swaledale Cheese from liquidators. Richard Darbishire, Bob Bigley and Bengt Odner bought the Richmond-based business in July 2019 and their first products are due to hit the shelves of both regional and national independent retailers and wholesalers in January 2020.

The origins of Swaledale Cheese are said to be traceable to the 11th century, when the cheese was made by Cistercian monks. When the monasteries were disbanded during the reign of Henry VIII, it's said that local farmers carried on making the cheese and Swaledale Cheese has continued this tradition of cheesemaking, using the same recipe.

Director Richard Darbishire said, "Our intervention has saved this important UK cheese from extinction. We are confident that by aligning our capabilities with the growing demand for our products and further developing the skills of our workforce, we will be able to restore the company to its rightful prominent place in the UK cheese sector. The brand was previously available in Waitrose as well as in leading restaurants, independent retailers and wholesalers. We aim to restore these listings."

"All our milk comes locally from a single source and we are focusing on seeing that both our blue and natural cheeses are fully matured and ripened in our specially designed, on-site facilities to produce that unique Swaledale flavour."

Blacksticks Blue offers cheese with a sweet twist

Looking for something a bit different to offer customers? Blacksticks Blue is branching out with the launch of its unique Cheese Brûlée. It's made with Blacksticks Blue's award-winning blue cheese which is then topped with a dusting of demerara sugar, ready for caramelising under the grill to form a brûlée's signature crunchy top for a zingy yet creamy taste.

Matthew Hall, commercial director of Butlers Farmhouse Cheeses, said, "Blacksticks Blue has always been considered an indulgent eat amongst cheese lovers, due to its soft creamy texture and irresistible blue bite. So a cheese brûlée was the logical next step, right? A true twist in the tale of mealtimes. A magical melange of creamy yet tangy Blacksticks Blue with a sweet sugar crunch. Blacksticks Blue Cheese Brûlée is the perfect fixture or menu addition to fulfil the needs of consumers looking for something a little different."



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Teesdale-based cheesemakers expand with new shop and café

Teesdale Cheesemakers in the village of Teesdale, County Durham have opened the doors to Café Cheesedale. Husband-and-wife team Allison and Jonathan Raper create cheeses using milk from the family farm. After moving to the premises in January 2019, work commenced on a conversion for the café, and was officially launched to the public on 15th November. Visitors were invited to experience the café menu and browse the shop.

Allison told *Speciality Food*, "The launch went beyond our expectations with standing room only on the open day and a flood of people all week since. We've had a lot of local support and even had returning customers already. We have some big plans for the future with cheese experiences



being planned in the short term and hopefully glamping next year so people can submerge themselves in a weekend of cheesemaking and wine."



CHEESE FACT FILE...

GORGONZOLA

- **Country of origin:** Italy
- **Milk:** Cow's
- **Type:** Blue
- **Varieties:** **Dolce:** Meaning 'sweet' in Italian, this is the younger of the two versions. It's a soft and buttery cheese with a mild taste.
- **Piccante:** This sharper cheese has a strong flavour and needs to mature for at least 80 days.

Travel through cheese history

Looking to brush up on your knowledge of the history of British cheese and cheesemaking? New book *The Cheesemonger's History of the British Isles* by cheesemonger Ned Palmer could be just the ticket. The author delves into the history and fascinating stories of cheese across Britain and Ireland and the craft of cheesemaking. A great coffee table book to keep delving into for information and inspiration.

IN **SEPTEMBER** UK
CHEESE **EXPORTS**
TOTALLED **18,016**
TONNES – **19%**
MORE THAN IN
SEPTEMBER 2018

SOURCE: AHDB

JUSTIN TUNSTALL RETAIL CONSULTANT



"Everyone's a winner"

I should apologise for lumbering you with that earworm from Hot Chocolate, but it may be a welcome replacement for Slade, Cliff or whichever tune preoccupied your earlobes over the Christmas trading period. It's seldom that one can state unconditionally that a competition has no losers, but in the case of last October's World Cheese Awards, judged in Bergamo, Italy it may be spot on. Bob Farrand, founder of the awards, passed on the following observation to me while we were judging 50 or so Cheddars at a local agricultural show: "The winner'll think we're geniuses, are perceptive and have enviably complex palates. The losers, of whom there are far more, will universally deem us idiots."

No cheese competition can have purely objective criteria, but those of us responsible for organising them try our damndest to ensure that each cheese entered has the very best opportunity to shine. Each judge, and each judging team, will have differing expectations and responses to the same cheese. A respected cheesemaker told me how he cut a large piece of cheese four ways and entered them into four classes at one competition this year. His identical cheese earned gold from one judging team, silver from another, then a bronze, and finally 'no award'. He was sanguine about these inconsistencies – after all, he had a Gold medal about which his marketing team could shout.

Back to the World Cheese Awards. Entries were up, the judging panels ever more international and more qualified; the networking

and camaraderie as valuable as ever. I've talked previously about how neither cheesemakers nor cheesemongers get to spend much time with their peers – the opportunity to share knowledge, stories and experiences helps all of us. The Supreme Champion, chosen by the chair of judges Nigel Barden following a numerical tie, was Rogue River Blue, from Oregon, USA. This win generated two important stories that got traction in consumer media. The first was about Rogue River Blue itself, and what the win might mean for the US's artisan cheese movement, now seen as coming of age. The second story was of French reaction to the win, and a perceived poor showing of French classics in the Final Fifteen. The reported outrage was widely publicised, at least in the UK and that's why I think the awards gave everyone a win.

Cheese marketers spend a lot of time trying to get publicity that will reach those who are not self-proclaimed cheese connoisseurs – the people who will default to buying bland, inoffensive 'plain' Cheddar from the nearest supermarket. If we can get them to think more deeply about the cheese they buy and start to realise that there's huge variety out there, that not every blue cheese is called 'Stilton' and one can buy it at times other than Christmas, then we have a chance to actually grow the market, rather than just switch twist Sharpham and Baron Bigod, for example. When that happens, all makers benefit, not just those who garnered the gongs this time around. "Everyone's a winner, that's no lie."



RETAILER INSIGHT... ANDY SWINSCOE, THE COURTYARD DAIRY

What's the ratio of international to UK-made cheeses in your counter? How has this changed and what powers are at play here?

“In the last few years the breadth of international cheeses we do has declined as the quality of farm-scale raw-milk cheeses made in the UK has increased. From almost one third of our range several years ago we now only do a handful of staples that really have no British equivalent in quality e.g. Parmesan and Gorgonzola. Our unusual one is Etivaz, which is similar to Gruyère and Comté but with a real punch of flavour. It is only made at high-Alpine, summer milk and made over log fires. Sold out at 14 months old it is a truly outstanding cheese that, for me, has no real comparison”

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LEVEL UP YOUR CHEESE EXPERIENCE

Accompaniments can make or break a cheese board. Here's what to stock to add interest to your counter

When it comes to selling cheese, knowledge of the different types available is only one side of the story. Being able to communicate effectively to customers what food and drink accompaniments can take their tasting experience of cheeses to the next level is essential, so if your pairing knowledge is a little rusty we have three experts that can provide a refresher.



Jen Grimstone-Jones,
cheesemonger
at Cheese Etc,
The Pangbourne
Cheese Shop

starts with the classic pairing of cheese and wine. "Cheese and wine produced in the same area work well together, so many French goat cheeses go nicely with wines from the Loire Valley. Champagne is a perfect match to double or triple cream cheeses such as the French Delice des Cremiers or the English Finn. It's also amazing with soft cheese that has truffle running through it. Red wines tend to go better with the more mature cheeses such as Cheddar, aged Gouda or Rutland Red. Stilton and port always go well but I also think that a sweet dessert wine is a lovely accompaniment to blue cheeses."

While wine is often the go-to alcohol choice when it comes to cheese pairings, there are other beverages out there that complement certain cheeses. With the huge surge in interest in craft beers in the last few years, it's a beverage worth taking on board when it comes to recommending drinks to your customers. Jen continues, "A pale ale goes nicely with a Camembert, whereas a washed rind cheese such as an Epoisses goes with a stronger farmhouse-style ale. More mature cheeses such as the Cheddars and old Goudas need a stronger flavour so go well with a bitter."

"Cider is another good match. Pear ciders will complement goat cheese whereas a more medium cider is lovely with the crumbly territorial cheeses such as Lancashire or Caerphilly. Cheddar goes well with a medium dry cider whereas the sweet ciders are perfect with blues."

We sell a lot of mead in the shop and I think it works fabulously with traditional farmhouse Cheddars such as Montgomery or Westcombe. We also do a dark mead which is good with smoked cheeses."

Accompaniments such as crackers, fruit and nuts are classics for a reason. It's well worth having a range of flatbreads, crackers and savoury biscuits on display as well as both traditional and more innovative flavours of chutneys, pickles and preserves that offer a variety of flavours from punchy to spicy.



Lucy Wright,
operations
manager at
Buchanan's
Cheesemonger,
says, "With
accompaniments

we try to make sure there's a good balance within our range between the sharp (chutneys, pickles) and the sweet (onion marmalades) so that there's something for everyone and every type of cheese. Likewise we have a few traditional bits and some more unusual. We love Rosebud Preserves and my favourite product of theirs at the moment is Wild Rowan Jelly – it's quite tart but sweet and a beautiful ruby colour, and it pairs deliciously with almost any cheese from fresh goats' to blues – I served it recently on a cheeseboard with Brightwell

Ash and Cropwell Bishop Stilton. Besides jars of chutney we also stock truffle honey, baked figs and fruit cheeses – we have quince and damson.

"Usually customers will ask us what accompaniments we recommend based on their cheese selection. The team tastes every new product and we make sure to

try it with a few cheeses so that we can advise on pairings. We are also happy to open products to sample to customers."

While it's important to impart your knowledge of staple pairings, take customer service to the next level by getting visitors enthused about trying different variations and new products.



Clare Jackson,
co-founder of specialist
cheese retailer Slate,
shares her most
recommended pairings

● BLUE CHEESE

The sweetness and rustic texture of oatcakes work really well with blue cheeses such as classic Colston Bassett Stilton. Alongside a scoopable, creamy Gorgonzola Dolce we recommend a crusty sourdough baguette, a few slices of juicy peach and a handful of walnuts.

● HARD CHEESE

With Pitchfork, the new award-winning Cheddar from Trethowan's Dairy in Somerset, we love a slice of fresh crunchy apple or a smidge of Smoked Apple Butter from Rosebud Preserves which is a deep smoky mix of Bramley apples, Madagascan vanilla and whisky.

● SOFT CHEESE

Slate favourite Baron Bigod is made at Fen Farm Dairy just up the road from our Suffolk shops. We enjoy it with Sourdough Crispbreads from Peter's Yard and a dollop of Slate chilli jam, sweet and tomatoey with just a hint of warmth. With a soft goat's cheese such as Dorstone or Hay on Wye from Neal's Yard Creamery we love a drizzle of local Suffolk honey from Bracey Bees and a handful of pistachios.

QUICK TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SALES

- Ensure signage on cheeses is clear – why not also use this as an opportunity to recommend some ideal accompaniments?
- Train up staff to ensure that all the options are presented to customers to create more chances for upselling. Chutneys and crackers are all well-known pairings but what about sweeter options such as honey, fruit or even chocolate?
- Consider positioning when it comes to both food and drink accompaniments. It could be worth having a display of top wines, breads and pickles next to the cheese counter to make those options clear for shoppers.

“Customers will ask us what accompaniments we recommend based on their cheese selection. The team tastes every new product and we make sure to try it with a few cheeses so that we can advise on pairings”

1 HAWKINS BROS FINE ENGLISH WINES Hidden Spring Bacchus

An ideal pairing with hard cheeses, as well as being recommended for salads and asparagus, this wine's gentle minerality is matched with the flavours of lime, greenage and passionfruit. The fruity flavours don't stop there, as there are also aromas of elderflower, pear and white peach. Director James Hawkins commented, "This is a light, fruit driven white wine with balancing acidity and minerality and would pair well with mature goats cheese or mountain cheese." hawkinsbros.co.uk



2 SHAW'S OF HUDDERSFIELD Smoky Chilli Jelly

New from Shaws is this sweet and smoky medium hot chilli jelly which adds a depth and gentle pop of heat to a number of dishes. It balances a white wine vinegar with Spanish smoked jalapeno chilli flakes and British sugar. MD Jan Docker said, "Shaws has always survived by adapting to and anticipating demand and we continue to follow the lead. We are a brand with our feet firmly in history but our eyes very much on the horizon, and our new Smoky Chilli Jelly, with its vibrant, contemporary design, is a case in point. Six months in development, our food technologist, Kate Pearson, has again fine-tuned a product that perfectly chimes with current trends: for world food, complex heats and for savoury jams and jellies, which we plan to further explore and develop into a third Shaws range." shaws1889.com



3 RAMBORN CIDER CO. Meadow Orchard Ice Cider

Premium craft cider and perry producer Ramborn Cider Co. has launched Meadow Orchard Ice Cider. Sustainability is at the heart of this dessert cider, with the use of apples that would have otherwise gone to waste. It uses 100% traditional cider apples and has a depth of flavour and texture. It's said to be an ideal accompaniment to foods with bold flavours including blue cheese, game or liver.

Adie Kaye, president of products and marketing said, "Ice Cider has been growing in popularity around the world over the last few years, with some of the best and most noted cider players getting involved. We're hugely proud of our first attempt and especially of turning what was effectively 'waste' into something premium and complex. The feedback we've received from professionals and consumers in our country has been incredibly promising – they tend to be a good barometer for us! We're now looking forward to reaching out to cider-lovers across the globe." ramborn.com



4 SEGGIANO Organic Buckwheat Digestive Biscuits

These gluten-free buckwheat biscuits are handmade by a family bakery in Puglia. They're free from dairy and yeast and work with sweet and savoury toppings. David Harrison, head of sales at Seggiano said, "Our organic, alternative grain handmade biscuits deliver flavour, nutrition and digestibility to the real food lover and importantly contain organic high oleic cold pressed sunflower oil instead of palm oil. The peculiarly British pleasure of our stone ground digestive biscuit is that it can be enjoyed with savoury and sweet toppings, making it pair beautifully with all types of cheese." seggiano.com



5 HAWKSHEAD RELISH COMPANY Spiced Apricot & Cranberry Chutney

Sweet apricots, onions, orange and cranberries combine together with garlic, ginger and spices for a rich chutney that's full of flavour. It's perfect with cheeses, cold meats and pies. Director Maria Whitehead MBE said, "Spiced Apricot & Cranberry works particularly well with a good Lancashire, Wensleydale, Cheddar or similar, the high fruit content and gentle spicing is designed to enhance the flavour of the cheese, with the slightly acidic nature of Lancashire for example it creates the perfect balance without diminishing or masking the integrity of the cheese." hawksheadrelish.com



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COUNTING ON CHOCOLATE

Is your chocolate selection satisfying the demands of today's consumer?

The British public continues to love chocolate in all shapes and sizes – just think about the excitement that arises when the seasonal chocolate tins come out at Christmas and Easter eggs grace the shelves come spring. While its popularity seems to be unwavering, the needs and wants of consumers continue to evolve, leading to chocolate brands regularly exploring new ethical, health and flavour avenues in order to satisfy shopper demand.

The rise in free-from

According to Mintel's *Global New Products Database*, in 2018 the UK boasted the highest number of new vegan products launched. Diets are changing due to ethical, environmental and health reasons, and as such, brands have had to adapt to cater to this ever-growing market. There's been a plethora of exciting launches coming through, from brand-new start-ups to the biggest players in the confectionery world. Galaxy, for example, now has three Vegan bars on offer – Caramelised Hazelnut, Smooth Orange and Caramel & Sea Salt – and is reported to be the first major brand to launch an alternative to

milk chocolate. Dark chocolate has increased in popularity, with many products being naturally dairy-free. Divine Chocolate has seen sales of its vegan-friendly offerings growing, with Chris Noel, sales director, explaining, "We saw our sales of vegan products grow by 34% in Veganuary last year in one large customer, with non-vegan lines declining by 6%. Whereas adopting a vegan diet can involve making compromises, none are needed when it comes to chocolate – the best dark chocolate should also be vegan, and Divine does not replace cocoa butter with cheaper milk fat or palm oil as some brands do. 70% Cocoa Dark Chocolate with Raspberries is our most popular flavour, delivering consistent year-on-year growth. We have also seen a rise in the popularity of our higher cocoa recipes, such as our 85%, and organic 95%, which is a bestseller, particularly in online channels."

A sustainable future

The need to find more sustainable packaging for products has spurred plenty of innovation across the confectionery sector. The Wizards Magic Chocolate brand, for example, boasts 100% recyclable packaging for

its three-strong range, which features flavours Original, Mint and Orange. Raw Halo also showcased a new look last year with entirely recyclable and plastic-free packaging. Yet another example is Flower & White who claimed to be the first confectioner in the sector to break into plastic-free packaging, getting the seal of approval from the FSC and the UK Recycling Association.

Making more eco-friendly decisions when it comes to packaging is just one piece of the puzzle, however. Consumers are more aware than ever of the impact on the environment along the chain from source to product. When considering whether to purchase chocolate these days, shoppers are weighing up so much more than just packaging, taste and price, with the brand's ethical and sustainable ethos coming into play as well.

Amongst Divine's varied product offering is an organic range of chocolate bars that are also vegan and Fairtrade. Chris Noel explains why the Fairtrade label is so important: "Sustainability in all its forms is becoming incredibly important to consumers, they want to ensure that people and planet have been cared for in the making of the



IN 2018, THE TOTAL TURNOVER OF COMPANIES PRODUCING CHOCOLATE AND CONFECTIONERY WAS APPROXIMATELY £4BN

SOURCE: STATISTA

food they eat. Fairtrade is the gold standard of certification schemes with 91% awareness and high levels of trust, and consumers continue to buy into it enthusiastically."

He goes on to explain what plans the business has in terms of sustainability for the future, saying, "We are focusing on ways to encourage sustainable farming practices in rainforest areas. In Sierra Leone we have invested in a new programme called Forest-

Friendly Cocoa, working with farmers on the edges of the Gola Rainforest to grow cocoa in harmony with the neighbouring forest and provide a buffer zone to prevent further degradation. The majority of Divine products are already plastic-free, and we are actively looking at how to reduce packaging waste. On our new organic range we have started using a new type of wrapper – it looks like plastic, but is actually biodegradable and can be put into home compost rather than landfill."

“ Sustainability in all its forms is becoming incredibly important to consumers: they want to ensure that people and planet have been cared for in the making of the food they eat ”

Don't forget the classics

While there are plenty of new ideas happening within this sector, it's wise not to underestimate the appeal for traditional-style chocolates. Luxury chocolate supplier Your Confectionery offers a select range of classic truffles made using quality Swiss chocolate. According to operations manager Mark McConnell, "Honey Caramel is by far our bestseller. People love the blend of honey and caramel all wrapped up in a smooth chocolate shell."

Fortnum & Mason unveiled its revamped confectionery department in September which includes a host of new chocolates. Commercial director Lucy Williams explains that it was important that classic customer-favourite chocolates and flavour combinations had pride of place among the new offerings, "Our Ruby Himalayan Salted Caramel Truffles are very popular – their story started in 2017 when we introduced Ruby Chocolate to the UK. The dipped Glacé Fruits Selection is another historic hit

“ By reviewing the range we've been able to add nearly 250 new flavours including an innovative Oud Caramel, an iconic Heinz Baked Bean Truffle (that sold out in a week) and an indulgent Knickerbocker Glory Truffle ”

with our customers, but the new loose chocolates have also proven to be very popular. Milk Chocolate Salted Caramel Ganache, White Chocolate Ganache Truffles and Blonde Chocolate with Macadamia Nut Bark are among the best-sellers, while those who fancy a tippie have been opting for Dark Rum Pussers Truffles and Dark Whisky Islay Truffles.

"Many customers have bought their chocolates with us for years and so our much-loved classics, particularly our Hand-Made English Chocolates (such as the Rose & Violet Creams) are an integral offering at

Fortnum & Mason – many of which boasting recipes unchanged for over a century. However, by reviewing the range we've been able to add nearly 250 new flavours including an innovative Oud Caramel, an iconic Heinz Baked Bean Truffle (that sold out in a week) and an indulgent Knickerbocker Glory Truffle. Some are clearly more unexpected and unique than others, an aspect that fills us, and customers, with joy."

Creating a confectionery section that incorporates a range of inclusive and delicious chocolates is a sure-fire way to keep customers coming back.

RETAILER PERSPECTIVE...



Finn Dunlop, general manager at Macknade, on what products are proving most popular with customers

ARE CUSTOMERS SHOWING MORE INTEREST IN VEGAN/FREE-FROM PRODUCTS NOW?

Yes. In the wider context, including other categories, vegan and free-from has continued to show increased demand. Chocolate is no different and there is a wider choice than ever before. Of relevance at the end of the year is the demand for our dairy-free chocolate advent calendars, for which we seem to

double the order each year and always sell out of.

ARE YOU STOCKING A RANGE OF ORGANIC AND/OR FAIRTRADE BRANDS?

Yes, we continue to see increased customer interest in brands that tell a story around well-considered provenance and growing or production methods. Whilst we are not perfect and there is always more

we can do, it is our responsibility to consider these when buying. At the same time, it is important to consider that sometimes there are equally great brands with great stories that may have fantastic methods and welfare but which have decided not to certify for perfectly valid reasons.

WHAT BRANDS AND TYPES OF CHOCOLATES ARE MOST POPULAR IN-STORE?

Seed & Bean, (organic, Fairtrade, vegan), Booja Booja, (Fairtrade, vegan), Cachet, (organic and cocoa for schools scheme) as well as Charbonnel et Walker, Cocoba, Chocolate and Love, Xocolatl, Goupie and Prestat, among many others.



SUMMERDOWN MINT THE MINT CHOCOLATE COLLECTION

A selection of milk and dark chocolates infused with the brand's single-estate peppermint oil. summerdownmint.com



CHARBONNEL ET WALKER UNION FLAG FINE CHOCOLATE COLLECTION

The striking gift includes beautifully enrobed chocolates with an assortment of delicious centres. charbonnel.co.uk



YOUR CONFECTIONERY HONEY CARAMEL TRUFFLES

Luxurious milk chocolate truffles with a honey infused caramel centre dusted in fine cocoa powder. yourconfectionery.com



MONTEZUMA VEGAN & ORGANIC DARK CHOCOLATE & COFFEE

Vegan and organic dark chocolate truffles made with freshly brewed coffee. montezumas.co.uk



CHOCOLATE AND LOVE PANAMA 80% SINGLE ORIGIN DARK CHOCOLATE

A full-bodied chocolate that is also mild and smooth, with hints of nuts. chocolateandlove.com



BOOJA-BOOJA HAZELNUT CRUNCH

A bestselling flavour for the brand, now available in ambient Two Truffle Packs. boojabooja.com

100% organic

Extraordinarily rich organic DARK CHOCOLATE

95% COCOA

Our Divine Organic collection is vegan friendly and certified Fairtrade. High cocoa. Low sugar. A must stock line for dark chocolate lovers.

Sustainable packaging

Divine
ORGANIC
EXCEPTIONALLY RICH DARK CHOCOLATE
95% COCOA

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GROWING A MARKET: VEGANUARY

The annual month of plant-based eating is upon us, but the smart money is following the crowd, not the vegan fringes, as this trend evolves. Anna Blewett investigates

Stats suggest just 3% of the population identify as vegan, and yet the ripple effects from this category are felt across the whole population. Waitrose's *Food and Drink Report 2019* might have numbered flexitarians at just 21% but that figure already feels out of date. So where is the market at now?



The Who

"Veganism is certainly a trend affecting pretty much the whole population," says Grenville Wall, consumer insight director at market analyst Kantar, which uses detailed weekly shopping diaries of 40,000 participants to track trends in behaviour. "This is a very strong, cohesive trend. There are pockets of strength: London and the South East, for example. You're 40% more likely to have a vegan or plant-based meal in London than the rest of the country. We also see it as being slightly more affluent behaviour."

But broadly, the data is very clear as to who's involved in this macro trend, with a massive 86% of plant-based meals being eaten by non-vegans according to Kantar's research, just as 89% of meat-free meals are eaten by non-vegetarians. "That suggests just how big the trend could be," says Grenville, "because it's everybody who takes one animal-based meal out of their repertoire rather than a smaller group with a very strict diet. It's traditional meat eaters looking for alternatives who are shopping all these aisles."

“You're 40% more likely to have a vegan or plant-based meal in London than the rest of the country”



The What

What does plant-based mean to your range? Whether you stock a whole host of 'fermentinos' on your cheese counter, or simply direct snackers to the accidentally-vegan Bacon Hoola Hoops in your kids' picnic bags, your stance is likely still evolving. "Traditionally vegan foods have been perceived, rightly or wrongly, as being bland or boring," says Michael Ratheram of 'healthier wholesale' supplier Epicurium. "But certainly the NPD and challenger brands are surprising everyone and reinterpreting the brief." Flick to the plant-based section of any wholesaler's listings and you'll find a whole lexicon of brand names that conjure a healthier, alternative and more aspirational way of eating: VioLife, Qwrkee, Biona, Terra Vegane, Plenish, Naturli, Karma Bites, Not Guilty, Boundless... "They're reinvigorating the vegan category to make it more exciting

and engaging," says Michael. "Particularly with millennials."

There are also plenty of challenger brands in the marketplace, with fleet-of-foot start-ups quicker to meet demand for novel ingredients or playful concepts. "Credit to Sainsbury's, they're probably furthest ahead with their 'brands of the future' initiative," says Michael. "The rest of the major multiples are still trying to catch up, whereas the joy of working with independent retailers is they're a lot more flexible and reactive to trends."

Ready meals are currently a big battle ground, with supermarkets nailing the own-brand offer. But the sands may be shifting in favour of specialist indie retailers. "At the moment a lot of sales are driven by NPD," says Grenville, "and a lot of that is driven by the fact most of us are new to this sort of diet. Lacking the knowledge to create plant-based meals, we're turning to the manufacturers to help us. If you look at the diets of vegetarians and vegans there's an awful lot more scratch cooking involved and very little use of pre-processed foods."

"As this diet becomes more mainstream for all in years to come I think we'll all learn to cook that way, so pre-made meals might drop a little in the future."

“The sands may be shifting in favour of specialist indie retailers”



“Veganuary serves to highlight that the diet is possible, and shows people the possibilities of how they could be eating”

The When

The caveat we always encounter when discussing the explosion in plant-based is a compelling one: growth has undoubtedly come from a small base. "The category's not a huge threat today," concedes Grenville. "It looks set to become so but today it's from a small base. What we're seeing too is that the proportion of us who eat meat or fish over a week has remained static as well, particularly chicken and fish." And yet, "There's a massive amount of people who don't identify as vegans who have an appetite

to move away from meat," says Peter Sharman, a one-time burger restaurateur who executed a perfect pivot to co-found fake meat brand THIS. "That's a huge market to cater to. Looking on a longer timeline I think vegan will grow, but because that's quite a prescriptive band I think what we'll see more of is meat eaters reducing their meat intake. Particularly as high-quality meat substitutes come onto market and represent less and less of a compromise for them." Pete's claims are backed up by Thurston Butchers in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, which in August last year became





The Where

Not buying all this talk of a plant-based food revolution? Just how high you're raising your brows right now may depend on your business's location, but interestingly for once this isn't a North/South issue. "The biggest differential in eating habits in this country tends to be London vs rest of the country," points out

Grenville. "So rather than North/South divide it's very much an urban/rural thing."

"There's a truth that big trends, particularly in food and drink, start in cities," agrees Theadora Alexander, co-founder of start-up community Young Foodies. "Not just London but also Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham... And then they filter out. That's partly because the big trends around convenience top-up shopping, for example, and health and wellness, are city-based by their nature."

Of course, location isn't just relevant on a national level. In the geography of your shop, the position of your plant-based foods also tells a tale. "As a category plant-based isn't like free-from always has been: just

confined to one fixture in the aisles," says market watcher Theadora. "We're seeing it weaved throughout the shelves, with supermarkets in particular knowing it's more of a switching choice for the everyday shopper, which is really encouraging." So far from occupying a small 'ghetto' of products for those on a restrictive diet, plant-based are increasingly mixed in with their animal-based alternatives. "From a shop-fixtures perspective that makes plant-based rather disruptive," says Grenville, "because it impacts on a huge proportion of the store rather than just

one little corner."

The exception to this rule comes for retailers finding it easier to treat plant-based as a stand-alone bolt-on, rather than a category that can be easily retro-fitted through the whole range. "We promote one metre fixtures to group plant-based challenger brands in one well-signposted location," says Michael of the novel products NPD that characterises plant-based foods. "Otherwise I think a lot of new-to-markets starts-ups can get lost if they're dotted around next to the big boys."

“From a shop fixtures perspective plant-based is rather disruptive”

86% OF PLANT-BASED MEALS ARE EATEN BY NON-VEGANS, WHILE 89% OF MEAT-FREE MEALS ARE EATEN BY NON-VEGETARIANS

SOURCE: KANTAR



the first butcher known to stock vegan 'meat'. "People are probably thinking it's absurd for a butcher to sell vegan produce," says owner Alistair Angus, "but I see it as an alternative. We actually get asked a lot by our customers for vegetarian or vegan alternatives so this provides a perfect answer."

Other retailers keen to build sales in this category will this month be leveraging Veganuary, the annual campaign to encourage plant-based living that's become something of a feeding frenzy for brands keen to promote their credentials to primed consumers. "Last year we didn't see much of a Veganuary effect," muses Grenville Wall. "It had surprisingly little impact in January on plant-based meals. But it certainly raises awareness and you hear anecdotally about a huge number of people trying the diet, even if rather a large proportion fail in a short period. It serves to highlight that the diet is possible, and shows people the possibilities of how they could be eating."

TALKING POINTS

BREKKIE RULES

"Breakfast is going particularly strongly at the moment," says Grenville. "I think the reason for that is that it's reasonably easy to make your breakfast plant-based. For the majority you just have to look for a dairy-alternative plant milk to splash on your cereal and put in your coffee."

BUYER BOTTLENECKS

"There are so many brands and shop owners only have so much time, so the bottle neck for start-ups trying to reach consumers is the buyer's time," says Theadora. No surprise then that 86% of start-ups sell via Amazon.

DOWN WITH PURISM

"Fray Bentos featured in PETA's recent vegan awards," points out Michael. "If a 'meat brand' like that can make inroads into vegans it goes to show any old perceptions of vegan have gone."

DON'T CALL IT A TREND...

Could it be a bubble? "I think it's not," says Young Foodies' Theadora. "That'd be like saying climate change is trendy. I think there's a shift in consumer mindset that's not going away. If you look at the stats the majority of shoppers are millennial and Gen Z, and they're only set to become a bigger proportion of the population. Any report on what's important to them names the environment: they live large, carry little and care about what they put their money behind. Sustainability matters to them, and we've all seen the stats that show the environmental impact of switching vegan for even one day a week. I think every retailer is cottoning on to the fact that if they don't play in this market they're missing a big trick with the future shopper."

The Why

What motivates today and tomorrow's plant-based shopper, as opposed to yesterday's, is interesting to unpick. For Theadora, who's currently engaged with helping a heap of recently launched vegan brands plus more in development, believes plant-based no longer defines itself in opposition to animal-based products. "There's a big 'better for the world, better for you' lean in the brands we work with. Yes, we're seeing more and more fake meats popping up... but also just a celebration of products that don't need to have meat in. Look at All Plants – it's not about creating fake meat, just celebrating plants. You can get pretty far without animal products and have foods that are just as delicious, just as good for you. The word vegan has always had connotations of 'life with less'. This is about having more."

"The perception with vegan products is that they're healthier, whether or not that's true," adds Michael. "Perhaps what does tend to mark plant-based products out is the quality of ingredients – particularly with the ethical brands that we source. They're made with wholesome, clean-label ingredients so they are healthier in that regard."

“You can get pretty far without animal products and have foods that are just as delicious, just as good for you”

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COOKING SAUCES: YOUR PASSPORT TO CULINARY ADVENTURES

Convenience may be king, but today's consumer is not willing to sacrifice when it comes to flavour and excitement finds Jackie Mitchell

Convenient and easy to use, cooking sauces tick many boxes for time-poor consumers who are also concerned about ingredients, especially the quantity of sugar, salt and artificial flavourings. Products are becoming more creative to meet consumers' demand for adventurous and unusual flavours – international cuisines are having a big impact on cooking sauces, with new product launches encompassing a wide array of countries from Brazil to the Philippines. British tastes are evolving with more demand for hot and fiery chilli flavours. Formats are

also changing; while most sauces are in jars, many producers are now offering sauces in pouches. Cooking pastes are also growing in popularity as they are seen as a good base for different dishes. Sauce meal kits are a new development providing consumers with a handy way to produce a meal from scratch without the hassle.

Although value sales of cooking and pasta sauces have declined by an estimated 12% between 2013-2018 (Mintel, Dec 2018), emerging cuisines are the only area where sauces enjoyed value growth. At the same time, cooking sauces are seen as a

kitchen cupboard staple, used by 83% of adults. Younger consumers, 16- to 34 year olds, are the biggest users (91%) with families a recognised user group.

Although Italian remains the largest cuisine in ambient sauces, its share has slipped one percentage point as sales have fallen. Liquid pasta sauces (the biggest segment) saw the largest decline. According to Mintel, this can be attributed to consumers using passata as a sauce base. Marinades and liquid pour over sauces grew in value by 14% year-on-year.

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES: BRINGING FRESH ENERGY TO THE CATEGORY

The market has seen an increase in cooking sauces influenced by international cuisines. For example, Seasonal Pioneers offers Thai Panang Gourmet Cooking Sauce – chillies are combined with Thai flavours of galangal, shrimp paste, holy basil and kaffir lime leaves. Or there's Vietnamese Kho Gourmet Cooking Sauce – Kho, the authentic Vietnamese braised stew sauce with roasted flavours of aniseed, holy basil and lemongrass.

Adobo is a cooking sauce from the Philippines, which uses five ingredients – soy sauce, vinegar, garlic, peppercorns and bay leaf. It has been created by Roni Bandong, founder of RoniB's Kitchen, from her family recipe. This cooking sauce is traditionally used with pork or chicken or both but can also be used with fish, shellfish and vegetables.

Food producer Ben Jackson from Capsicana has developed a range of cooking sauces using unusual Latin American chillies. Brazilian Chilli and Coconut sauce, which uses Frutescens chillies, is based on

the Brazilian fish stew recipe, but can be used with chicken, pork or vegetables. Other varieties include Peruvian Chilli and Lemon Sauce.

Yugo Spice, a new company started by Renad Sheraif, has developed a range of sauces tapping into this sector. Renad says, "I wanted to bring some fresh energy and impetus to the category, which is looking a little tired and pedestrian. People are demanding higher quality products because for too long we've been inundated with mass-produced sauces that don't deliver on taste. Consumers are discovering new cuisines as they travel more and they're looking for something new."

The new launches include two stir in pastes – Miso Chipotle and Curried Sun Dried Tomato. She adds, "We wanted to create a product focusing on fusing flavours from different cuisines because no matter how well travelled you are, you probably won't have tried these flavours. They are versatile – for example the Curried Sun Dried Tomato works well with roast cauliflower or as a sauce for a chana masala."

Indeed, cooking pastes are becoming more popular – according to Mintel, 65% of consumers consider them as versatile as they can be used as a base for dishes such as soups and stir fries.

"ADDRESS CONSUMERS' CONCERNS AROUND SUGAR, SALT AND ARTIFICIAL INGREDIENTS"

Ingredients in cooking sauces are a major concern for customers. As Anita Winther from Mintel says, "Addressing consumers' concerns around sugar, salt and artificial ingredients will be key to turning the tide." In the report, it says concerns around different ingredients are barriers stopping a third (32%) of people (less frequent/non-users) from using them.

Producers are responding to this by ensuring that sauces are made from natural ingredients with no added sugar, salt or additives. For example, entrepreneur Tanya Robertson-Lambert has created a range of fresh, cold pressed sauces under the umbrella The Saucy Affair. The natural sauces were devised while Tanya was struggling to find appropriate products for her family,

and are made from fresh herbs, fruit and vegetables. They can be used hot or cold and include Fiery Fiasco, Teriyaki Malarkey and Beetroot Cahoot, all of which are vegan, gluten and dairy-free.

In particular, cooking sauces containing herbs and spices, such as turmeric, are gaining momentum in the category. This can be partly attributed to the health benefits associated with them. This is the implication from the Mintel report, with a total of 49% consumers interested in products containing spices and herbs (Mintel Dec 2018).

CUSTOMISATION: AN UPSELLING OPPORTUNITY

The Mintel report states that 72% of consumers like to customise sauces by adding herbs and spices. As a way of encouraging sales, serving tips could be displayed for customers on the shelf next to the sauces in your shop. These could include suggestions to add chilli, a squeeze of lemon, fresh herbs, a dash of red wine or balsamic vinegar during the cooking process.

Joe Alio, from Alio's Delicatessen in Surrey, says that the bestseller at his shop is the Mutti range of Italian tomato cooking sauces in several varieties – Parmigiani Reggiano, Basil and Grilled Vegetables, although he also stocks Cirio passata sauces. He says, "Customers are looking for better quality sauces made from natural ingredients, not necessarily hotter. You need a mix – everyone's taste is different."

CATERING FOR THE GROWING FREE-FROM MARKET

A recent survey revealed the number of vegans in the UK has risen to 3.5 million. To capitalise on this market, new vegan cooking sauces are emerging which not only cater for vegans, but also 'flexitarians' who occasionally eat meat. Sarah Gray from The Butcher and Deli in Rustington, East Sussex, says most customers enquire about gluten-free food. "All the cooking sauces I stock are gluten-free," she says, "and I offer a mix of sauces to cater for those who want a traditional sauce and others who are looking for something more adventurous." This includes curry sauces by Madhuban, such as korma, chicken masala, balti and jalfrezi.

Add flavour to your food with our range of delicious chilli pastes made from our family recipe from DR Congo. You can use as a marinade, table sauce and cooking ingredients. Made with 100% natural ingredients. Suitable for Vegans neemafood.com

SPOTLIGHT ON: SAUCE KITS

Another area of growth, kits usually comprise a separate paste and spices.

Anita from Mintel explains, "Exploring the sauce kit format could help boost association with healthiness and authenticity while also delivering both on the cooking experience and convenience." Mintel's report revealed they are seen by 45% as creating a more authentic meal, while 32% consider them to be healthier.

● Old El Paso, well known for its Mexican meal kits which are now veterans of the market, have been joined by other brands over the past few years. Itsu has introduced Chilli Sesame Tofu Meal Kit with spicy Szechuan sauce, sticky rice, sesame seaweed topping and sesame chilli oil to which the consumer just adds peppers and tofu. Capsicana has

branched out to launch a range of meal kits, including The Mexican Chilli and Honey Fajita Kit, comprising the sauce made from Mexican-grown chipotle and ancho poblano chilli peppers, as well as a Chipotle chilli salsa mix. Also new is the three-step Chilli kit, inspired by the chileajo dish from South Mexico and Texan chilli. To finish off, there's a dark chocolate mini bar which is melted into the dish to create chilli con carne.

● Thornleys Natural Foods follows the concept of a meal kit with its range of recipe mixes. The Tuna & Pasta Bake Recipe Mix only requires the addition of milk, sweetcorn, tuna and pasta. The video on its website shows how the dish can be made in minutes.



ASPIRE TO EXPAND

Future-proof your shop by making changes that will benefit both you and your customers

Have you had a look around your retail space recently and felt that it's time for a refresh? In order to stay competitive and continue to ensure a good experience for visitors, it's worth considering an expansion or refurbishment project. While investing during this tough retail climate can seem daunting, adding a café, gift section or even an in-store butchers or bakery is a way of creating additional money-making opportunities that can entice visitors to come back time and time again.

The benefits of refurbishment

Decorating and revamping your retail space can make a world of difference to the customer experience. Aside from aesthetic changes that can be made depending on budget such as a lick of paint, updating to eco-friendly lighting and ordering new furnishings and storage units, it's also important to think about layout. Shuffling around product displays and re-configuring how shoppers walk around the space

is key and helps to differentiate your shop from others in the area.

When the Canalside Farm Shop & Café was expanded, the interiors also received a facelift. Anna Barton, head of business development at Canalside, said that the customer journey was a big consideration when planning the work, "We felt the inside needed to look far fresher, with the food telling the story rather than too much signage. We wanted our display units to look unique and showcase all of our produce to the best of its ability. We also wanted the customer journey to make more sense so a lot of time was spent with the interior architect and our shop manager making sure we had the best possible layout, which we feel we have achieved," she says.

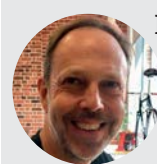
Expanding the retail space

There can be many reasons why an expansion can be the right move for your business. For Canalside, the desire to enhance their range of own-brand products meant that changes needed to be made. Anna explains,

"We added an in-house bakery and increased our shop floor space by around 30%. Our bakery revenue has increased by around 150% comparing YOY so far, and we feel the produce we offer is far superior than any 'bought-in' items we were selling previously. We have also managed to increase our gift range and have more space to do in-house tastings so that customers can try new products before purchasing which we have found to increase sales also. The space that we extended the farm shop into was also becoming more and more redundant as it was used to pack our wholesale strawberries. We have slowly been doing less and less wholesale business (and now do none at all) so there was less requirement for such a large packing area."

Rupert Evans owns and operates Denstone Hall Farm Shop & Café with wife Emma. Works to the premises have included a two-storey extension, new garden room and increased spaces in the car park. Rupert explains the benefits that the renovations have given the business; "Last year we completed a two-storey extension which has come into its own this year by giving us the floor space we wanted for Emma to create a huge Christmas retail experience upstairs, where the whole of the first floor has been given over to selling everything from decorations to wrapping to gifts.

"This has given us a great opportunity to expand our food offering because it has freed up floor space in the main farm shop, which has enabled us to increase the range of home-made, home-baked produce across the deli and butchery departments. These are two areas in which we are experiencing



Lloyd Blakey is the founder and creative director of Innovare Design, a consultancy specialising in retail branding and interior design and a member of the Design Business Association. He explains the key points to consider before refurbishing or expanding a retail space:

WHY?

It's so important to be clear about what you are trying to achieve. What are the drivers for your refurbishment project or expansion? Do you need to fight off local competition, are you finding it difficult operationally, or is it about delivering additional products/services to improve your customer experience?

CUSTOMER FOCUS

Outside of practical/functional improvements, any investment in refurbishing or expanding your space must be customer-focused. So talk to your customers – what do they love about you and what, if anything, would they like you to change/improve?

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

How do your customers describe who you are and what you do? Does this fit with your own vision for your business and if not, why? How you

got here today and why you do what you do make great brand stories that customers can engage with. It's why they choose to shop with you. Your retail space needs to bring your brand to life and express your passion for what you do and what your customers love.

LEARN FROM YOUR COMPETITION

Go and visit your competitors or other indies you admire. What is it that makes what they do so successful? This is a great way to get inspiration for your own business.

BE REALISTIC

Think carefully about what you can afford to invest and what realistic financial return you can expect from your investment. Maybe you can't do it all at once? Phasing these things is often possible to reduce your risk, and your designer/shopfitter can help you plan this.

growth, with demand increasing for vegetarian items such as our quiches and fritattas, and more customers showing an interest in pre-prepared quality meat products with known provenance from our butchers. Increased floor space has been vital in allowing us to respond to such changes as well as develop into a 'destination' where visitors can enjoy

a richer, more varied and a longer-lasting visit."

When it comes to any planned works, the key consideration is to create as many opportunities as possible for sales. Ensure that even one-time visitors are able to see clearly your USP and the products and services on offer and are encouraged to purchase.



Manufacturers of depositors & filling machines for the food production industry



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SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

NEW PRODUCTS. LATEST TRENDS. THE DRINKS TO STOCK

DRINKS BUYER

2019

FROM TIPTREE WITH LOVE

Discover Tiptree's new range of fine English Gin, Vodka & Rum Liqueurs

INDUSTRY: GEMMA COOPER, NIELSEN, 'GIN IS STILL HUGE NEWS' P. 8

SCOTLAND: IZ BAKER, TIPTREE, 'HERITAGE MEETS INNOVATION' P. 12

TRENDS: DARREN NUGENT, 'ION DISTILLERY: THIS IS RUM'S YEAR' P. 25

For a preview or to submit your drinks contact Jess on 01206 505901 or jessica.stevenson@aceville.co.uk

TASTE DIRECT

★ 2020 ★

Your chance to sample new and exciting products for free! Simply fill in the form and samples will be sent directly to your store



SWEETS IN THE CITY

Sweets in the City's new range of 'Duals' jellies hit the headlines following founder Sarah Lynn's win on BBC business show *The Apprentice*. With the growing premiumisation of confectionery, Sarah and Lord Sugar were aware that if customers were going to indulge in sugar they wanted it to be worth it and developed a set of four 'dual' flavoured vegan sweets: Pineapple & Coconut, Mango & Passionfruit, Apple & Watermelon and Strawberry & Lemonade.

Cleverly and unusually made with a gelatine-free pectin fruit centre (two of them having a touch of fizz!), the range satisfies many dietary requirements being gluten-free, vegan, using real fruit juice, natural colours and flavours. The taste and texture of the jellies elevate and expand the current vegan sweet offer available on the market, and have huge mainstream appeal by taking away the compromise on taste accepted by some vegan recipe competitors.

All four flavours are available in two SRP pack sizes, a 50g Grab & Go and 125g Share Bag.

FREE SAMPLE
TRY THE RANGE
FIRST 100!

DRAGONFLY TEA

Dragonfly Tea is an independent British family company with over 100 years of expertise in sourcing, growing and making the very finest of teas.

The team's long-standing relationships with growers and master tea-makers around the world help them to source the highest quality sustainable and fairly traded harvests.

From breakfast to bedtime, Dragonfly's organic speciality range includes classic black teas, delicate green teas and gentle herbal infusions that are perfect for tea lovers and tea explorers alike. The string and tag teabags are folded and stitched, making them plastic and staple-free.



FREE SAMPLE
MIXED BOX
FIRST 100!

NEEMA

The Neema Food range offers a perfect balance of heat and flavour. Enhance meals with the spicy range of African pastes. The versatile offering consists of: African Scotch Bonnet Ginger & Chilli Paste, African Green Bullet Chilli Paste and African Scotch Bonnet Chilli Paste. A family recipe with heritage. Rose's (founder) mum made the products as a 12-year-old for boarding school to add flavour to her food. Made from 100% natural ingredients, no added sugar, no additives or preservatives. The range is ideal to marinate your veggies, fish or meat before cooking. Chilli pastes also work well when added to curries and pasta dishes to add beautiful spicy flavours. Suitable for vegans and vegetarians.



FREE SAMPLE
MIXED BOX
FIRST 100!

BURTS

Our thick cut British Potato chips are hand-cooked in Devon, with real taste and proper crunch, and made by real people. We locally source the best Red Tractor Assured potatoes, slice and cook them in small batches, and season with the best flavours around. When it comes to unique flavours, we're the ones to beat. Where else will you find a range of snacks made not only using local ingredients, but with diversity including the likes of Firecracker Lobster and Devon Roast Beef? All products contain no MSG, hydrogenated fat, artificial flavourings or colourings.

FREE SAMPLE
MIXED BOX
FIRST 100!



LA BANDIERA

Organic, award-winning, single-estate extra virgin olive oil from Tuscany. La Bandiera EVOO is produced in the wine growing area of Bolgheri on the Tuscan coast of Italy – home of the Super Tuscan vineyards of Ornellaia and Sassicaia – where the unique coastal climate and rich landscape is ideal for olive groves. An exquisite, smooth-tasting extra virgin oil, La Bandiera olives are harvested from the end of October to the end of November for a full-bodied flavour with fruity and spicy aromas.

Over 1,000 olive trees are harvested each year to produce the estate's exclusive label, organic premium extra virgin olive oil. La Bandiera has maintained the highest standards of production and has been granted the prestigious IGP (Indicazione Geografica Protetta) in recognition of both the origin and quality of the oil.



FREE SAMPLE
500ML BOTTLE
FIRST 60!

YOUR CONFECTIONERY

Introducing Your Delicious – luxury Swiss chocolate truffles from Your Confectionery Ltd.

Honey caramel (milk chocolate shell wrapped in a dark chocolate layer, with a honey-infused caramel centre) is our flagship flavour, proving very popular and flying off the shelves with both consumers and retailers alike. Other flavours in the product range include:

- Champagne: white chocolate shell with a Marc de Champagne and cream centre
- Salted caramel: milk chocolate shell with a sea-salted caramel centre
- Hazelnut: milk chocolate shell with a hazelnut, chocolate and cream centre
- Espresso: dark chocolate shell with a cream and coffee liqueur centre
- Raspberry Champagne: white chocolate shell with a cream, raspberry puree and Marc de Champagne centre.

FREE SAMPLE
HONEY CARAMEL TRUFFLES
FIRST 100!



TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ALL OFFERS

- Offers are only open to potential stockists of the products and are fulfilled at the producer's discretion
- One order per customer
- Offers may only be available to new customers, however this is at the producer's discretion
- There are no cash or credit alternatives to any of the offers
- The producers reserve the right to withdraw the offers at any time
- All orders and offers are fulfilled and dispatched by the producers, therefore *Speciality Food Magazine* is not responsible for any disputes over delivery, eligibility etc
- Offers available until 31st January 2020

CAKEHEAD

At Cakehead we make insanely good and indulgent baked goods that are also easy to order, delivered on time and a joy to display. We know you're busy, so you need delicious baked goods that make your life easier and that your customers will love.

**FREE
SAMPLE
INSANELY
GOOD CAKES
FIRST 100!**



DOUBLE DUTCH

Double Dutch, the award-winning drinks brand, founded by Dutch twins Joyce and Raissa de Haas, offers a nine-strong range of premium tonics and mixers to enhance your spirits or to savour solo as a refreshing soft drink. Utilising the process of molecular gastronomy to create unique flavour combinations, the collection includes mixers Cucumber & Watermelon, Pomegranate & Basil and Cranberry & Ginger, as well as Indian & Skinny Tonic Water, Soda Water, Ginger Ale and Ginger Beer. Low in calories and made using 100% natural and organic ingredients.



**FREE
SAMPLE
MIXED BOX
FIRST 100!**

LITTLEPOD

Vanilla is one of nature's finest ingredients. Harvested from an exotic orchid, it grows only in a limited number of tropical habitats. LittlePod source all their vanilla responsibly and are committed through their campaign for REAL vanilla to educating people about the five year labour of love that produces a vanilla pod. As winners of the Queens Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development in 2018, LittlePod can be justly proud of their achievements over the last 10 years.

The delicious paste has been specially created to provide top quality vanilla in an easy and versatile form with no wastage and less bake off. Each tube has a two-year shelf life and contains the equivalent of 20 pods, seeds and all. Put it in your coffee, porridge, smoothies and ice cream.

LittlePod products are gluten-free, suitable for vegans and won the Best Product Ingredient for the Baking aisle award at Koshfest in New York in November 2019.

They are essential storecupboard ingredients!



**FREE
SAMPLE
NATURAL
VANILLA PASTE
FIRST 50!**



ETHICAL DAIRY

Discover delicious dairy products you can feel good about. Our traditional cheeses and luxury ice creams are made with organic milk from our own dairy herd, where the calves get to stay with their mothers to suckle naturally. Our radically different approach to dairy puts animal welfare and positive environmental impact at the heart of everything we do. We are the first commercial dairy in the UK to be following the cow with calf method, and our ethical dairy model is based around treating the animals, the land, our environment and the people who work here with respect and kindness. Ice cream samples limited to existing distribution regions.

**FREE
SAMPLE
CHEESE OR
ICE-CREAM
FIRST 100!**



Getting your hands on free samples could not be easier. Simply fill out your details below or save yourself a stamp and visit tastedirect2020.com

Taste Direct is only open to retailers and potential stockists of these products

YOUR DETAILS

NAME: _____

JOB TITLE: _____

BUSINESS NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

MOBILE NUMBER: _____

BUSINESS TYPE (DELI, CAFÉ ETC)? _____

DO YOU HAVE A LICENCE TO SELL ALCOHOL? _____

DELIVERY ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

EMAIL: _____

COMPANY WEBSITE: _____

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PLEASE SEND ME THE FOLLOWING SAMPLES

- Sweets in the City ☐
- Burts ☐
- Neema ☐
- Dragonfly Tea ☐
- La Bandiera ☐
- Your Confectionery ☐
- Cakehead ☐
- Double Dutch ☐
- LittlePod ☐
- Ethical Dairy ☐

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tastedirect2020.com



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TALKING SHOP

While sitting at my desk to consider what to write about for this issue, it seemed only fitting to look back at the highlights of 2019. It was a whirlwind of a year, with the Future Food Awards, events galore and keeping up with the constant wave of innovation and new launches in the food and drink industry.

So what have I learnt during this year on *Speciality Food*?

1 The sheer level of innovation that happens in this sector is quite something. It's no exaggeration to say that I receive tens of emails daily about new product launches – everything from CBD, non-alcoholic drinks, vegan options and so much more. It's exciting to open the inbox every morning and see what products have just launched or are about to, and to discover businesses that are coming up with fresh ideas to respond to the needs and wants of consumers. Being a vegetarian myself and having friends and family that are vegan, it's been especially interesting to view this category and how it's evolving. In the past year alone the number of meat alternatives on the shelves has increased, and it's a time of real choice for those who need or wish to change their diets.

2 There are plenty of businesses in this sector that are making sustainable and eco-friendly decisions. For consumers or people outside of the industry, the news is full of doom and gloom stories about food waste and the impacts of climate change, and they don't often hear about those companies that are making positive changes and contributions to the industry while still creating delicious and effective products. Take Rubies in the Rubble for example, who produce condiments using produce that would otherwise have gone to waste. There's also a whole host of companies updating their packaging to be more eco-friendly, using less plastic and more recyclable materials. It's hard to imagine what 2020 will bring, but I'm looking forward to finding out!

We always want to hear the opinions of our readers – do you have a story to share, expertise to pass on or a comment to make? Please do get in touch with us at lucy.macdonald@aceville.co.uk.

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TWITTER POLL

What customer events do you run?

CHEESE PAIRING
14%

WINE TASTING
40%

MEET THE PRODUCER
46%

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5 MINUTES WITH... ANNABEL THOMAS, CEO AND FOUNDER OF NC'NEAN

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

If I wasn't in the food and drink industry, I'd probably either be in travel, or just on the outside of the industry looking in!

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

Working in a local pub.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

The opportunity to make a difference in the world, and businesses that seem to be doing so. Also nature – being in it, understanding it.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?

That's a hard one – no job is perfect but I've also been lucky enough not to have any truly terrible ones. The



worst was probably one particular assignment at my old consulting firm which involved a lot of travel, not very nice people and a really boring subject matter.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?

Too many to list! Tasting our evolving spirit. Talking to consumers about our spirit and what we stand for. Hearing great feedback on the experiences consumers have had with our team on a tour of the distillery, for example. Being recognised publicly for what we are trying to do.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?

Long hours and lots of travel (the latter is often fun, but I'd prefer it was a little less frequent).

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?

Favourite: How friendly the industry is, especially the whisky sector in Scotland. Least favourite: The waste that some parts of the industry creates.

TEA OR COFFEE?

Coffee. (But ideally Earl Grey tea first thing and a flat white at 11am.)

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?

Something cooked by the team at Duck Soup in Soho.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?

I don't really have a personal one, but I'm in love with Nc'nean's: made by nature not by rules!

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

I had fried lung once at Bocca di Lupo – I wasn't very keen on it.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?

The Africa House by Christina Lamb.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?

If I really had to choose, savoury.

SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

Inside the next issue of Speciality Food:

- Essential Products (for Spring & Summer)
- Fairtrade and Sustainable
- Temperature Controlled Packaging
- Frozen Food & Ready Meals
- Cheese Events
- Tea



For a preview or to submit your drinks contact
Jess on 01206 505901 or jessica.stevenson@aceville.co.uk

TRIED & TESTED

THE WIZARDS MAGIC CHOCOLATE

As someone who tends to choose savoury over sweet, it's not often that I'm especially interested in chocolate. I was, however, keen to try this 1% sugar, vegan-friendly, gluten-free and high fibre chocolate. Attracted initially by the packaging and then by the taste, this chocolate is ideal for those moments when you want something sweet without the guilt! I particularly enjoyed the refreshing flavour of the Mint version. thewizardsmagic.com

MAC. BY BROOKIE'S

For a liqueur that's full of warm, sweet and nutty flavours, this one by Cape Byron Distillery really hits the mark. Made from Australian locally-sourced roasted macadamia nuts and toasted Wattleseed, it's a liqueur that can be enjoyed in different ways. I tried it served over ice but it could be used in a cocktail, mixed with ice cream or popped into a coffee. Definitely worth adding to the drinks shelf. capebyrondistillery.com



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



FOR THE LOVE OF ITALY

We're shining a light on the UK's premium retailers that are providing quality, authentic Italian foods

The UK has had a long-standing love affair with Italian food. According to a recent study conducted by YouGov, Italian food is in fact the most popular in the world. It states that while the biggest fans are the Italians themselves, in the UK 91% of people who have tried Italian cuisine report that they like it. And what's not to like? It's up there as one of the top choices when it comes to comfort food – after all, there's not much that can beat a bowl of really great pasta or a delicious homemade pizza.

When it comes to home cooking, it's clear that consumers are seeking out great quality ingredients more than ever. Shoppers are looking for places that sell great cheeses, fresh pasta and premium ingredients to use in their cooking at home to recreate some of the great dishes they may have tasted in restaurants or perhaps even on holiday in Italy.

We share this love for all things Italian, and so are using this space to celebrate the cuisine as well as the retailers that have been selling authentic Italian produce for years, sometimes even generations. One to highlight is Lina Stores in London. Established in 1944, this deli has been selling Italian produce for over 75 years and still makes fresh pasta and sandwiches on-site daily. Also look out for its

Soho-based restaurant and King's Cross restaurant and deli. And this is just the tip of the iceberg; here are just a few retailers in the UK that are flying the flag for amazing Italian produce:

Head South East and you'll find Buongiorno Italia in St Albans, which was established in 1978. This multi award-winning deli has a range of salami, cheese, antipasti and coffee. In Edinburgh there is Valvona & Crolla, said to be Scotland's oldest deli and Italian wine merchant, founded in 1934. Boasting an online store that sells cakes, biscuits, coffee, sausages and so much more, tasting and cookery demos are also held in the Caffè Bar. Meanwhile, Salvi's Deli aims to bring a slice of Neapolitan life to Manchester, with a deli featuring authentic produce and an area for customers to sit and try food including their mozzarella boards.

Up and down the country there are passionate people introducing customers to the wonderful world of Italian food and drink. Are you one of them? If so we would love to hear from you, so please do get in touch with any comments at lucy.macdonald@aceville.co.uk.



THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Ben Tish is culinary director of The Stafford Collection, including the recently opened Norma

DIARY DATES

January

12th-14th TOP DRAWER
Olympia, London
topdrawer.co.uk

13th-15th BELLAVITA
RAI Amsterdam
bellavita.com

19th-21st THE WINTER FANCY FOOD SHOW
Moscone Center, San Francisco
specialtyfood.com

19th-21st SCOTLAND'S SPECIALITY FOOD SHOW
SEC, Glasgow
scotlandsspecialityfoodshow.com

February

2nd-5th ISM COLOGNE
Koelnmesse, Cologne
ism-cologne.com

2nd-6th SPRING FAIR
NEC, Birmingham
springfair.com

5th-6th THE SOURCE TRADESHOW
Westpoint, Exeter
thesourcetradeshow.co.uk

12th-15th BIOFACH
Nuremberg, Germany
biofach.de

I'm lucky to live in deepest darkest East London, between Limehouse, Whitechapel and Mile End. The area is incredibly diverse and exciting. While there is some gentrification, it's a slow burner, unlike most of Hackney. I love it for this.



organic veg shop. I will grab a loaf of sourdough and some homemade lemon curd on my way home through Victoria Park from my favourite

place there, The Pavillion Café & Bakery. They also do a wicked vegetarian breakfast.

I spend a lot of time working in the West End so often do a bit of shopping there for the weekends. Coffee is a big thing in my house so I stock up on mocha parfait blend coffee at the Algerian coffee store. They grind and weigh it for you there and then you can get a brilliant, quick espresso on the way out for £1.

Over the road I head to I Camisa – the oldest Italian deli in London and somewhere I've been going for many years. Great pasta and cheese but if you are in the know you can ask for 'behind the counter' fresh fennel and pork sausages. They either have them or they don't, and they are amazing. They also have fresh black and white truffle in season at sensible prices.

My work also occasionally takes me down to St James's, so if I'm around there I always pop into Fortnum's and stock up on some of their own-brand chocolate. It's not cheap but if you want the ultimate indulgent shopping experience then this is the place to go.

My shopping depends on my eclectic tastes when it comes to home cooking. For spices and exotic Asian and Indian products there's no better and cheaper place to go than the Bangla Bazar on Salmon Lane. It's popular, so everything is turned around quickly and is super fresh. Their range of spices is also awesome. They do things like date paste and wild and wonderful green chutney sauces that I love to experiment with.

It's a short walk up the canal for me to get to Victoria Park village which I'm convinced holds some of the best local shopping in London – with the best shops all within a stone's throw of each other. Ginger Pig is the best butcher around by far and I always buy my Sunday roast meat from there. Jonathan Norris is one of the last great fishmongers and there's always some hot smoked salmon for my dog.

Wine is from the brilliant and knowledgeable Bottle Apostle and beautiful, fresh vegetables from the



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