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2023

A TASTE OF THE FUTURE



Meet the Innovators

We profile 10 people shaping the future of food

Powers at Play

Explore the influences behind the evolution

A Shared Future

How you can take a role in what's to come

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SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR AWARDS 2023

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SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR
11-12 SEPT 2023
OLYMPIA LONDON

FUTURE FOOD ICONS

Meet the people who are poised to transform the food and drink sector in the coming years

From the chief executives of trade bodies who help shape policies to the famous faces sharing recipes on our televisions and phone screens, the food and drink sector is chock full of influential voices. Here, we shine a light on the people who are set to shape the future of the sector.



Nicola Woods, event manager for Speciality & Fine Food Fair, reflects on some of the most important trends set to define the future of food and drink.

It's always fascinating to see how trends and topics in the fine food sector evolve, and nowhere are they more clearly on display than along the aisles of Speciality & Fine Food Fair.

For example, a decade ago, free from was arguably still at the start of its transformation into the thriving product category it is today. Natasha's Law, HFSS, and more continue to ensure this topic stays in the headlines and remains a focus for product developers. There's still so much innovation in the free from category, and so many niches to explore. It has become one of the most exciting and creative categories in the world of food and drink.

An issue close to our hearts at Speciality & Fine Food Fair is that of food waste. Issues stemming from the cost-of-living crisis and supply chain challenges show no signs of slowing down, which makes the issue of food waste even more important. Like many London retailers and hospitality businesses, we partner with City Harvest to reduce our impact and ensure excess food goes to a good home. Technology has a hugely important role to play in reducing food waste: from accurate forecasting to connecting food with those who need it, we're only as good as the infrastructure we rely on. The UK food and drink sector has made huge strides in this area, and we expect this to continue to evolve in the years to come.

Finally, and not to sound like a broken record, but sustainability continues to be the defining issue facing our buyers and producers at the Fair. Strong ESG credentials have rapidly gone from a nice-to-have to a vital part of any business plan, and this eco revolution shows no signs of slowing down.

Discover the future of food at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2023, taking place on September 11-12 at Olympia London. Visit specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk to learn more.



Holly Shackleton, editor of *Speciality Food*, is excited by what's to come for the fine food and drink sector – and the role we all play in shaping it.

In curating this series of features about the future of food and drink, I was instantly struck by the size of the task at hand. After all, what I – and others who work within the industry, I'm sure – find so exciting about food and drink is just how wide-reaching its scope is.

We are all very well aware of the connections between food and drink and the natural environment –– after all, it is what sustains us – and the importance of doing right by it, however much others may choose to ignore the importance of this. Government could be seen to be guilty of this, in some cases at least, so we're also drawn into regulations. Whether the rulings that are needed are there, if they're being followed, and how they should be adapted. Speaking of evolution, technology also plays a part. Making grand ideas into tangible business moves is often down to the technology we work with, and so while it perhaps plays a bigger role in larger industrial-scale businesses than SMEs, it absolutely shapes what we do.

But the largest impact is made by people. Passionate innovators who work incredibly hard and make sacrifices to make the world a better one for all of us. So that is where we shall begin.

Henry Dimbleby

FOOD CAMPAIGNER AND CO-FOUNDER OF LEON



Having shot to fame in the foodie world as the co-founder of the restaurant chain Leon, Henry Dimbleby has become better known in recent years for his work on food policy. After co-authoring The School Food Plan, which outlined how to transform what children eat in schools and how they learn about food, he became the lead non-executive board member of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in 2018. In 2020 and 2021, he published the two parts of the landmark National Food Strategy, which was hailed as the most ambitious review of the UK food system for 70 years. But this year he quit his role in Defra over frustration at a lack of strategy from the government. He accused the government of "ignoring" the ticking time bomb of health issues stemming from food and of giving up on their pledges on public health and going backwards on the issue of obesity. Despite leaving his advisory role, he is not giving up on the cause. His new book, *Ravenous: How To Get Ourselves and Our Planet Into Shape*, written with his wife, columnist Jemima Lewis, tackles the current health and climate crises in a way he hopes will be more accessible to the average Brit than a government whitepaper. With his big ideas about the UK's food and farming systems, there is no doubt he'll continue to be a significant figure in the sector in the coming years.

Renée Elliott

FOUNDER OF PLANET ORGANIC



This year, Renée Elliott is stepping back into the food and drink industry with a bang. In 1995, she founded Planet Organic, the UK's first organic supermarket, and caused a huge shift in the way Brits think about food. But she decided to step away in 2009. This year, Planet Organic was facing collapse having come under pressure from high inflation and overheads. When she was called in March and told the business would be going into administration, she had no intention of returning to the helm of the business. "Brian, my husband, and I decided to look for a buyer, help raise money and put a small team together," she tells Speciality Food. "Over four very intense weeks of the situation changing and moving continuously, we decided we are the safest hands for Planet Organic, so we put a bid together to buy the business from the administrator," she says.

Now, she's set to return to her mission of promoting healthy food and drink, challenging conventional retailing and showing that values-led business is good business. With 30 years of experience in business and personal development, Renée also mentors start-ups and small businesses on purpose, resilience and strategy through her second business Beluga Bean. "I'm most looking forward to re-building a beautiful business that people love to work for, that promotes the health of people in our communities and supports the earth's biodiversity," she says. "And to do all that while having fun."

Jamie Oliver

CHEF, AUTHOR AND CHILD HEALTH CAMPAIGNER



As one of Britain's foremost celebrity chefs, Jamie Oliver has played a huge role in shaping Britain's food and drink industry in recent decades. He has authored more than 30 cookbooks and fronted dozens of TV programmes following the success of his 1999 debut, The Naked Chef. Going beyond his role as TV chef, he took up the baton for raising awareness about processed foods in school lunches, and in 2005 he campaigned to improve standards. Following his success in highlighting this issue, he's still fighting to make progress in child health today, with his organisation aiming to halve childhood obesity in the UK by 2030.

However it's not only his work in schools that earns him a place on this list. Jamie Oliver is a true champion of British food and drink, and when the country faces challenges, he doesn't shy away from the limelight. In the midst of the Covid-19 lockdowns, he started a new TV programme, Keep Cooking and Carry On, which showcased flexible, simple meals and even involved filming on Jamie's and his family's phones. More recently, Jamie's £1 Wonders has highlighted budget-friendly meals during the cost of living crisis. "We just responded to what you guys were asking for," he said of Keep Cooking and Carry On. Indeed, listening to the public and quickly responding with just the right thing is what Jamie Oliver does best.

Michael Thomson

CHEESEMAKER AND OWNER OF MIKE'S FANCY CHEESE



Belfast-based Michael Thomson has been making Young Buck, a raw milk blue cheese, in Newtownards for nine years, but he's more than a farmhouse cheesemaker: he's a proper champion of great cheese. After learning his trade at the School of Artisan Food, Mike worked for David and Jo Clarke on Sparkenhoe Farm, the team behind Leicestershire Handmade Cheese Co. He returned to Belfast to start making his own cheese in 2013, and in 2019, he opened his shop, Mike's Fancy Cheese, inspired by the growing local cheesemaking scene. From his shop, he works directly with producers selling Irish cheese with a focus on Irish raw milk cheese and small farmhouse producers. "I came from a retail background and really enjoy having a shop in the centre of Belfast," he says. The shop has become a hive of activity: "We run beer and cheese pairings and work with lots of local businesses around us to try to create a vibrant community in what would be seen as quite a neglected part of Belfast," Mike tells Speciality Food. He enjoys building connections with producers, many of whom can't keep up with demand. He feels this start-up phase is the trickiest for producers in the region. "Cheesemaking has such high start-up costs for equipment, and a lot of legislation and paperwork to get started and can be a daunting task and definitely a reason that puts off home makers getting any bigger," he says. He sees a gap in the market for a forum connecting farmers who want to be start-up cheesemakers – but in the meantime he is happy to take on this role himself: "We try to be that in the shop."

Jason Gibb

ENTREPRENEUR AND CO-FOUNDER OF BREAD & JAM



The indie food industry is at its best when brands are sharing their knowledge and working together to achieve great things. This collaborative attitude is the driving force behind Bread & Jam, the UK's biggest food and drink founders' festival. Jason Gibb launched Bread & Jam with co-founder Tara Mei in 2016 to support the growth of innovative food and drink brands.

After working as a TV producer, a book author and a qualified biochemist, Jason dove into the food and drink sector when he bought an abandoned olive grove in Le Marche, Italy, and created the olive oil brand Nudo. After 10 years working to make the business a success, he decided to change gear to co-found Bread & Jam, an annual conference that aims to be a one-stop shop for emerging and scaling brands. Each year, 16,000 food and drink brands emerge into the market in the UK, but 90 percent of them don't make it past their first year of trading, according to Bread & Jam. It's a shocking statistic, but perhaps not surprising to food and drink industry players. By bringing together entrepreneurs, investors, retailers and other industry leaders, the event has become a place to learn and grow – and a mainstay in the independent food and drink sector's calendar. With innovative brands cutting their teeth at Bread & Jam, it's the place to look for the entrepreneurs of the future.

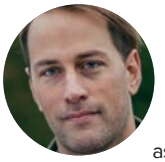
Minette Batters

PRESIDENT OF THE NFU



Minette Batters has a rich history in the world of food and farming. Alongside running a tenanted family farm in Wiltshire, which includes a 100-cow herd, as well as sheep and arable crops, she has been president of the National Farmers' Union since 2018. In her role, Minette has faced no shortage of significant twists and turns in politics and policy, from her influencing voice in Brexit negotiations to the Covid-19 pandemic, where she championed British farmers at some of their most dire moments. In 2020, she led a hugely successful petition, bringing together a coalition of chefs, including Jamie Oliver, farmers, environmentalists, consumer groups and animal welfare experts – resulting in over one million people signing the NFU food standards petition. Campaigning on behalf of NFU members about the critical role of British food and farming in health, sustainability and food security has been central to Minette's role since becoming president of the organisation.

In her message to members at the start of the year, Minette said, "The importance of British farming to deliver food and energy has never been clearer." This year, she has prioritised putting British food security on the agenda and setting the pathway to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2040. "I am hopeful that 2023 will be the year that the government gets serious about British food and farming," she said.



Tristram Stuart

FOUNDER OF TOAST ALE AND FEEDBACK

From rearing pigs and chickens on food that was destined for the bin as a teenager in Sussex to starting his own environmental campaign organisation, Tristram Stuart has helped to put the food waste issue on the national agenda. His work highlighting the perfectly good food that could be recovered from supermarket bins led to seismic change in the industry. In 2009, he published his international prize-winning book, *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal*, and that same year he organised a 'Feeding the 5,000' event in Trafalgar Square, where 5,000 people were fed lunch with ingredients that otherwise would have been wasted.

Following this success, Tristram founded an environmental campaign charity, Feedback, which he ran until 2017. Having helped numerous start-ups in the food waste space, he decided in 2016 to launch his own: Toast Ale, which crafted beer using bread that would otherwise go to waste. Since Tristram started raising awareness about food waste, he cites a significant, measurable reduction in food waste. "People are wasting a third less per capita than they were back then," he tells *Speciality Food*. But he sees his work as far from finished. "Food waste was always the first step in what is a much bigger global transformation that we need to go through," he says, "and I'm very much focused on how we can use food to transform the food system."

Helen Browning

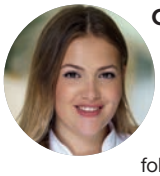


CEO OF THE SOIL ASSOCIATION

Today, sustainability stands front and centre as a key pillar in the food and drink industry – but it wasn't always this way. The Soil Association has worked for over 75 years to transform the way we eat, farm and care for the natural world, and as such it has become an important and influential voice in the food and drink sector. The charity's *Organic Market Report* is a closely watched gauge of demand for organic food and drink, and the group regularly throws its weight behind issues facing the sector.

Helen Browning has been at the helm of the organisation since 2011, and she also works as a commissioner for the Food Farming and Countryside Commission, which was established to encourage ideas about where our food comes from, how we support farming and rural communities and how we invest in the benefits the countryside provides. Having held a number of key roles in agri-politics over the years, including the Government's Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food (also known as the Curry Commission), Helen is deeply embedded in the food and farming communities. With sustainability set to be a significant influence in the future of food and drink, her role in leading the Soil Association and commitment to building farming systems of the future will only become more influential.

Poppy O'Toole



CHEF, AUTHOR AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE

Michelin-trained chef Poppy O'Toole has been described as "the Millennials' answer to Delia Smith" and "the poster girl for TikTok cooks". After gaining 10 years of experience in professional kitchens, her engaging approach to food has won hundreds of thousands of followers on Instagram and over four million followers on TikTok. TikTok is the new arena for home cooks and serious chefs alike, with the site's algorithm sending trends exploding onto the food scene left and right, from viral veggie corn ribs to the Feta pasta that no one can forget.

Poppy is one of a wave of young chefs using the platform to share their love of food with younger audiences – and her position as a judge on *Young MasterChef* solidifies her position as one of the key voices shaping younger generations' view of the food industry. With easy-to-follow recipes and simple tips, she is helping to make the foodie world more accessible.



Karen Betts

CEO OF THE FOOD AND DRINK FEDERATION

Ever since the Brexit vote, there's been a growing movement to champion British food and drink manufacturers both at home and abroad. Karen Betts, who was appointed as the FDF's CEO in 2021, has worked to do just that by representing the huge range of companies that keep food on our tables and make up the UK's largest manufacturing industry. "These are rapidly changing times, with challenges and opportunities for the industry to grasp in everything from addressing climate change, to skills and livelihoods, and healthy diets," Karen said upon her appointment to the role. Since then, she has been involved in everything from campaigning the government to tackle food and drink inflation to discussing accelerating the sector's journey to net zero carbon emissions. Recent moves have also shown the organisation's focus on supporting manufacturers both large and small. For example, the FDF launched a new online platform to help manufacturers invest in innovations like new technologies, automation and sustainability: the Food and Drink Innovation Gateway. "The UK's food and drink businesses are the lifeblood of our homes and our communities," Karen said at the time. "But these companies are often small and struggle to find the bandwidth and the right support to invest in the right technologies and innovation to help them grow to their full potential." With access to technology likely to be a defining feature of the future of food, it's only right that Karen champions the industry's many small businesses.



4 FORCES SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE FOOD SECTOR

Courtney Goldsmith examines the movements that will have a lasting impact on what and how the UK eats

Trends come and go. For each craze that becomes ingrained in the way British consumers eat, there are dozens more that have been lost to time. While short-lived fads can certainly provide value for retailers, when it's time to get the crystal ball out to gaze at where the sector is headed in the next decade, they tend to fall flat.

To understand where the food and drink sector is headed, we need to look at the deeper movements underpinning these passing trends. By understanding these, independent retailers can get ahead of the curve and be at the cutting edge of the industry. Here, we'll look at four forces shaping the future of food and drink.

1 CLIMATE **CHANGE**

Anyone working in the food and drink sector knows that sustainability is much more than a trendy buzzword. The impact of the climate crisis on the global food industry is not only poised to reshape supply chains and define the crops of the future, but as consumers become aware of the impact of their diet on the planet, eating habits are shifting too. Kantar's *Global Trends Report* found that consumers are driving 920,000 monthly average searches for 'fair trade' and 254,000 for 'sustainable agriculture'.

"As the growing consciousness around sustainability gains momentum, consumers are paying more attention," the report says. It cites a "genuine interest" in learning about sustainable agricultural methods and regenerative practices. Reading the tea leaves shows that consumers are looking at sustainability from a long-term perspective, with a growing interest in areas like soil health, managing food waste and sustainable packaging. Interest in 'regenerative agriculture' grew by a whopping 85 percent. "Consumers are vested, aware, and willing to hold brands accountable," the report says.

The growing interest in a sustainable food industry may not be so surprising when we consider how present climate change has become in our daily lives. "We can no longer consider climate change as a future threat," Jayne Brookman, EIT Food's chief partnership officer tells *Speciality Food*. "Every corner of the globe, including the UK, is experiencing change now, from unpredictable weather patterns, extreme climate events and seasonal shifts, to increased health risks, rising food insecurity and rapid biodiversity loss." And the food and drink sector is at the centre of this quickly shifting arena. "The food system is both a cause and casualty of these challenges, and stakeholders in the UK food industry must continue to adapt to ensure food is affordable, sustainable and nutritious," Jayne says.

Farmers are at the frontline of these changes, but consumers will also play a key role, and Jayne only expects their understanding that dietary changes are needed to grow. For retailers, this means you can expect to see more consumers seeking out local meat and produce, alternative proteins or brands with high environmental standards.

> "Stakeholders in the UK food industry must continue to adapt to ensure food is affordable, sustainable and nutritious"

2 DISRUPTION FROM **NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

The continual need to create solutions to address challenges like climate change has fostered an innovative growth spurt in the food and drink sector. From developing new materials for planet-friendly packaging to expanding the concept of animal-free protein, there are countless areas where innovation in technology will have huge impacts on the food system in the years to come.

Kantar found a 17 percent growth in interest around 'cultured meat', also known as lab-grown meat. This year, a team of scientists created the world's first 100 percent cultivated steak. Made of pork cells, the fillet reportedly replicated traditional pork meat in look, flavour and texture. The 3D Bio-Tissues team called it a "cruelty-free fillet" and said it exceeded expectations. However, researchers at the University of California, Davis, this year claimed that lab-grown meat's environmental impact is likely to be even worse than retail beef. As this technology is only in its infancy, it is hard to predict where it will end up, but with the market valued at $246.9m in 2022 and predicted to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 51.6 percent, we are certainly likely to see more results sooner rather than later.

Another area ripe for innovation is sustainable packaging. There are several avenues being explored today, from recyclable to biodegradable – and even edible. Australia's Good-Edi has crafted an edible coffee cup which is made from natural ingredients like flour, wheat bran, oat bran, salt, sugar, coconut oil and water.

Technology is not only disrupting materials and ingredients, but it's also making the global food sector more transparent. As consumers demand transparency through the global supply chain, businesses are developing ways to trace products and ingredients through data and cutting-edge technologies. With consumers quick to lose trust, retailers should be on the lookout for brands that find ways to showcase their sustainability credentials with hard data in the years to come. shoppers don't want to sacrifice flavour. "The quest to find something that is 'better for me' while satisfying the sweet tooth continues," the report says. "It's about satisfying cravings by mimicking feel good foods through healthy, plant-based ingredients or through the creation of new recipes that continually engage." Brands that do this successfully will be the ones to watch.



A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Where are technological innovations making the most impact? Jayne sees big opportunities in circular economy solutions. "Food waste in the UK accounts for approximately 15 billion meals being thrown away every year and 25 Mt of greenhouse gas emissions. A recent UK Food Standards Agency poll also revealed that 60 percent of people in the UK are concerned about food waste, showcasing an appetite for greater guidance and solutions," she says. "Innovations such as Mimica's accurate expiry date food labels and envoPAP's waste valorisation solution are helping to support consumers and industry alike to design out the concept of waste and contribute to the circular economy, but further investment and support is needed in order to scale solutions at speed."



3 HEALTH REGULATIONS

Restrictions on retail placements of foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) came into force in October 2022, and a ban on multi-buy offers is set to take effect in October 2023. Meanwhile, the junk food watershed – a ban on advertising HFSS food before 9pm on television and online – will now come into effect in 2025.

Originally, the price restrictions and TV advert bans were set to come into force earlier, but the introduction has been delayed due to the cost-of-living crisis. Delayed or not, the rules have already led more businesses to invest in reformulating their products. Food and drink from members of the Food & Drink Federation (FDF) now contribute 13 percent fewer calories, 15 percent fewer sugars and 24 percent less salt to the average shopping basket than they did eight years ago, according to analysis by the FDF.

"These latest figures show the fantastic achievements the UK food and drink industry continues to deliver," says Kate Halliwell, the FDF's chief scientific officer. However, the research showed that small and medium-sized businesses in the UK are having more difficulty reformulating HFSS products, with larger companies managing to achieve improvements that are four times that of smaller companies. "With 97% of the food and drink industry made up of small to medium-sized companies, these companies can play an important role in providing healthier options but many do not have the resources, or technical expertise, to reformulate their products."

With health in the sight lines of the government, companies and the public, there is no doubt the shift towards healthy food and drink products will continue to be a huge force of change in the coming years. Of the 10 trends Kantar's report identified for 2023, half related to consumer health. But while health is important, shoppers don't want to sacrifice flavour. "The quest to find something that is 'better for me' while satisfying the sweet tooth continues," the report says. "It's about satisfying cravings by mimicking feel good foods through healthy, plant-based ingredients or through the creation of new recipes that continually engage." Brands that do this successfully will be the ones to watch.

4 LESSONS FROM COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic showed us how fragile global supply chains are, and that to ensure resilience in our food systems, we need to shift from global to local. "In a 2020 EIT Food study, 35% of European consumers said buying locally produced food was more important to them during the Covid-19 pandemic, and, within this group, 87% also said this will very likely continue to be the case in the future," Jayne says.

Food shortages seen during the pandemic, as well as supply problems caused by everything from adverse weather conditions to Brexit to poor economic conditions, underlined the importance of creating a resilient food system. According to Global Food Security, the UK imports 48 percent of the total food consumed, and this is rising. The farming industry has spoken about the importance of creating a 'farm to fork' supply chain to build a more sustainable and resilient food system.

While the question of food security needs a joined-up approach, according to Jayne, there are technological solutions to boost local, circular food systems in the UK, too. "This includes controlled environments agriculture (CEA) methods. Whether in urban or rural areas, CEA enables people to grow food on land in a more diverse range of locations, providing the opportunity for producers to locate their production closer to consumers," she says. "This includes production methods such as in-land aquaculture systems, greenhouses, and vertical farms." While a holistic solution may seem a long way off, we can expect to see more steps in this direction over the coming years.

Amid current challenges like the cost-of-living crisis, it can be difficult to see the wood for the trees, but another lesson to take away from the Covid-19 pandemic is the way the sector rallied together during a difficult time to make the impossible happen. From building a resilient food system to adopting innovative technologies, these industry-wide movements will be most successful when the sector bands together. As Jayne says, "We must continue to work together, share ideas, and innovate to ensure food is not only healthy and sustainable, but also affordable and accessible for everyone."



DEFINING YOUR MISSION

With mindful consumerism becoming more apparent than ever before, how can the fine food industry cater to demand? Two experts weigh in

The idea of a business's 'mission' is not a new one; nor is it a topic which focuses purely on a singular level of sustainability. For too long, naysayers have chalked key issues up to the socks and sandals brigade demanding that energy and funds be funneled into 'unnecessary' causes, but now that the impact of unsustainable business is clear for everyone to see there has never been a more vital time to act – for the sake of people and prosperity, as well as the planet.

Amongst conscientious fine food and drink businesses and consumers, the proactivity around holistic sustainability is strong. No wonder the number of businesses within the sector that are now B Corp-registered – proven to be using business as a force for good – is growing. "I think the B Corp is rapidly becoming the golden standard in terms of validating a company's mission driven marketing claim, and in the next 12 months it's going to be increasingly recognised and understood by the consumer," says Jason Gibb, founder of Bread & Jam – a network which hosts events and training to support emerging and scaling food businesses – and host of May's Future Summit – which saw mission-driven food and drink businesses group together to learn and collaborate for a better future. No wonder there are now over 1,300 B Corp-certified businesses in the UK alone.



Defining 'mission-driven'

But what makes a business mission-driven? Amirah Jiwa, an independent social impact and sustainability consultant, defines it as: "A business that aims to make a positive impact in a specific social or environmental issue area, alongside making money."

For Jason, today's smart businesses are focused on securing a better future for us all. "A mission-driven business is one that wants to change the world for better. And they want their customers to be part of that change," he begins. "The majority of the businesses that come into the Bread & Jam community are mission-driven to some extent. It may be that they are focused on their supply chain, their carbon footprint, or maybe they want to rid the world of plastic. Whatever their purpose, they tend to better that brand with no mission as the belief in what they are doing gets them through the challenges of starting up a food business."

While interest and passion might be high, it's easier said than done to make a sizeable impact, says Amirah. "It requires meaningful investment – not necessarily of money, but of time, thought and energy," she says. "In the current economic environment this can be hard for brands to find. Coming up with the best way to communicate impact efforts is another challenge: it can be tricky to come up with messaging and campaigns that are clear and compelling while also capturing needed nuance (and complying with the Green Claims Code)."

A bright future

Within the fine food orbit, there is an impressively large – and growing – proportion of people who are making proactive choices to make what they consume less damaging for the future of people and the planet. This means that by toeing the line between a sustainable business model and the challenges today's consumers are facing, independent fine food retailers, producers and beyond can appeal to both shoppers and their bottom line.

"Given a choice consumer want to do the right thing and will prefer something that is ethical and sustainable. But the key is that you give them a genuine, price-comparable choice – so, for example, the packaging-free products need to be the same price as the packaged product and the Fairtrade, sustainable coffee has to be at a similar price point to a premium coffee," says Jason. "Otherwise there is definitely an action intention gap on the part of the consumer – they'll say they strongly believe in something, but when it's time to put something in their basket they'll base that on price."

Amirah agrees. "Between the pandemic, extreme weather events happening with more regularity and divisive politics, the future feels increasingly fraught. Consumers are looking for ways to make a difference, and purchasing from brands whose values align with their own often seems like one small but accessible way to do that. Given two brands with similar products, one with an added social or environmental benefit and one without, why wouldn't you choose the more impactful option?"

A challenging trade-off

While one would hope that every business approaches becoming mission-driven with an entirely holistic mindset, the fact is that any kind of solution to one problem will bring up a linked issue somewhere else down the line. "There is no silver bullet when it comes to any social or environmental issue – no perfect solution that has benefits all round," explains Amirah. "For example, buy-one-give-one schemes could displace local entrepreneurship efforts while increasing access to an important good; switching to compostable packaging could reduce your impact as long as it doesn't make it harder for consumers to correctly dispose of your

packaging; and sourcing locally might reduce shipping emissions but it might also reduce the earning potential of communities in the Global South."

A smart approach, making sure that you're aware of both the positive and negative impacts of your decisions, is vital. "Almost all choices involve trade-offs and it's important to be as aware of any potential negative effects of your efforts as you are of the benefits.

Understanding the full impacts — good and bad — of a choice will help you make informed impact decisions and avoid accidental greenwashing," Amirah says.



The danger of greenwashing

"With so many companies large and small shouting about their missions, their ethics and their eco-credentials it can be nigh on impossible to distinguish the fakers from the bona fide," says Jason. "Every time I see a business claim that a tree is planted for every item sold, beer drunk or internet search made I think to myself 'where the hell are all of those trees?' Surely we'd be drowning tree if it were true!"

With a disappointingly large number of businesses 'greenwashing' their work to make it appeal to conscious consumers, there is a lot to be said for consumers educating themselves – as well as *Speciality Food* readers, industry players and producers picking up the mantle – so that they are able to sort the fact from the fiction. Thankfully, resources are available and there are bodies doing the work to provide clarity. "There are a lot of BS claims around carbon neutral, carbon negative and offsetting in the food and drink world, but the robust framework that the science-based targets (SBTs) give us are really helpful," says Jason.

Eternal potential

The good news for businesses wanting to define their mission is that the boundaries are only defined by the work you want to do. "The 'missions' are endless," explains Amirah. "You can focus on issues that are relevant to your consumers, connected to the ingredients you source, affect the communities involved in your value chain, or have particular resonance amongst your employees."

With such a wide scope for working for the good of people and the planet – attracting conscientious shoppers along the way – the future is an increasingly exciting place for mission-driven ventures.



> "The 'missions' are endless. You can focus on issues that are relevant to your consumers, connected to the ingredients you source, affect the communities involved in your value chain, or have particular resonance amongst your employees"



THE FOOD OF THE FUTURE



The food industry is unavoidably shaped by large-scale forces, but what does this mean in terms of what we produce, sell and eat? Tastehead's Brandt Maybury digs in

Having read Courtney Goldsmith's feature on the aspects of our lives that are impacting the food industry in huge ways (p26-27), you'd be forgiven for thinking that the evolution of our industry remains outside of our control. Government regulations, planet Earth's environments, and scientific advancements all play a sizeable role in what we consume, but to ignore the valuable position the fine food sector – consisting of passionate, knowledgeable and dedicated small and medium-sized enterprises of all descriptions – would be to do it a disservice.

We caught up with Brandt Maybury, co-founder and managing director of Tastehead – a food and drink development agency – to gather their thoughts on how these huge market forces are set to impact the day-to-day of food industry professionals in the coming years.

Powerful influences

According to Brandt, we need to look beyond the obvious to learn the full extent of the forces shaping food and drink. "I think it's fair to say that more external forces than I can ever remember are currently affecting our industry. The obvious ones include: Covid-19, Brexit, the war in Ukraine, the cost-of-living crisis, global warming, various strikes... The less obvious ones include the advent of artificial intelligence. It might sound silly to think it's going to have a significant impact on the F&B industry, but in a similar way to how rapidly the pandemic evolved the DTC (direct to consumer) channel, I think AI has the potential to change our day to day lives enough that it impacts our supply chains, consumer habits, marketing strategies and much more."

A topic that *Speciality Food* readers will be far more familiar with is the evolution of the plant-based category. "This in a pivotal position at the moment whilst consumers, brands and retailers all try to better understand the role that plant-based alternatives play and how much they should/shouldn't copy existing animal-based products. The plant-based revolution will probably drive diversity in flavours and products as we explore new ingredients to replace animal derivatives. Clinical studies, data and news articles will continue to debate what is best for us, best for the planet, and ultimately the most ethical decision to make which will continue to be a huge influence on the trends and NPD in this category.

"Finally, HFSS is still on many people's minds. We're still waiting to see what the final outcome will be, but brands and retailers are continuing the work towards changing and developing new offerings in anticipation."

Speaking of new offerings, format will play a vital role in the future of what we eat and drink. Today's consumer is more conscious than ever of the danger of single-use packaging, leading forward-thinking businesses to rethink the materials they are using to package their produce.

The differing ways in which consumers shop is having an effect too. "The rise in DTC will likely see an increase in online-exclusive brands and personalised products, changing the way we shop and consume food and beverage products," says Brandt.

An opportunity for indies

"The first noticeable impact will most likely be on availability and diversity of products," says Brandt. "External pressures like Brexit and global warming may impact supply chains, potentially leading to a more locally-focused, sustainable product offering. This could result in a resurgence of traditional British flavours and ingredients, while exotic ingredients may become rarer or pricier."

How will consumer tastes adapt to fit the new reality? "They may become more accustomed to local flavours, seasonal availability and a lean towards healthier taste profiles. With continued efforts to reduce sugar consumption I would expect this to have a real impact on the general population's acceptance for sweetness levels in the long term. It will be interesting to see how the latest news around sweeteners not actually helping people to lose weight (and potentially being linked to health issues) impacts HFSS and the overall approach to reducing sugar in sweet foods.

The health halo

The world's consumers have become more aware of their health than ever since the Covid-19 pandemic kicked it into the headlines, and British shoppers are becoming increasingly keen to add an element of health-giving functionality into their diets – ideally via convenient formats. This push is coming from potentially unexpected places. "For starters, the push towards sustainability will give rise to the exploration of new, under-utilised local ingredients, potentially unlocking novel natural sources of nutrients," explains Brandt. "Furthermore, the growing focus on health and well-being will create opportunities for functional foods that offer additional benefits beyond basic nutrition, such as immune support or gut health. And the adoption of AI and other advanced technologies will open up opportunities for precision nutrition and hyper-personalised products."

While it may seem niche now, the American market offers a taste of what's to come. "I was over in California last year on a research trip, and adaptogens, nootropics, prebiotic fibres and other functional ingredients are now featuring in almost every category, even in the larger/mainstream retailers such as Ralph's and Target," explains Brandt.

How to make it happen

"The entrepreneurs of the industry will view these as opportunities for growth and transformation, rather than a cause for anxiety," he says. "However, it is essential to acknowledge that these changes require agility, adaptability, and a willingness to take some risks. Traditional models may need to evolve, and I'd suggest that businesses should be prepared to invest in technology and sustainable practices to facilitate this.

"It's a transformative time for the food and beverage industry. We're at the cusp of significant change – much of it driven by external forces. But it's also a time of great innovation and potential. Despite the challenges, I firmly believe that the industry's future is bright. As we navigate these changes, it's important to remember that at the heart of it all is the need to nourish and delight consumers in a sustainable and ethical way, whilst keeping taste at the heart of any food or beverage product. Let's not lose sight of that amidst the whirlwind of change."

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