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SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS



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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the January 2021 issue of *Speciality Food*, our first publication for a year which is set to bring a whole new set of opportunities and challenges – some of which will be a continuation of the ones we all experienced in 2020 (Brexit and Covid-19), while others will be brand new and could shape the course of things to come for us all.

Within this issue, we're sharing a number of invaluable tidbits of advice, from trends to look out for to business insight from top industry figures to help you navigate the year ahead. We showcase exclusive columns containing expertise from FSB chairman Mike Cherry and NFU president Minette Batters, too.

Plus, alongside this issue you will have received our inaugural *Inspirational Cheese Retailers* publication; a project inspired by the passion, determination and innovation demonstrated by some of the cheese industry's most noteworthy independent shops. Compiling it was a joy, and I hope you find it an inspiring read.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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2020: a look back at a tumultuous year for food and drink

We look back on how the Covid-19 pandemic reshaped the food and drink sector in 2020

JANUARY
'Vegan' was once again the word on the fine food sector's lips at the start of 2020. Veganuary welcomed a record-breaking 400,000 vegan-curious and flexitarians into its fold, and a number of new product launches were unveiled, making it easier than ever for retailers to cater to their rising numbers. Meanwhile, the government awarded £1bn to town centres across the country as part of its Future High Streets Fund.

FEBRUARY
The UK's organic market reached a value of £2.45bn, up 4.5% from the previous year, as organic produce became more relevant to shoppers seeking out ways to reduce their environmental impact. Indies were found to defy 2019's dreadful retail figures, which had it dubbed "the worst year on record". However, job cuts were on the cards at Tesco's bakeries as the retailer cut the amount of baking from scratch.

MARCH
The Coronavirus pandemic well and truly arrived in the UK, and the impacts on the food and drink sector started becoming clear. Panic buying left many supermarket shelves empty, trade shows were postponed and the UK finally went into a full lockdown on 16th March. It wasn't all bad news though – consumers began to explore local food retailers, which went above and beyond to serve their communities.

APRIL
The entire dairy supply chain called for government support to save the industry from "irreversible damage". Dairy farmers and cheesemakers faced financial pressure due to the closure of restaurants and cafés, with some being forced to dispose of milk or cheese. But elsewhere, online retail sales were rocketing. Online shops, digital support hubs and other schemes sprung up to boost indie retailers, and those that adapted early saw green shoots in their businesses.

MAY
Ministers responded to the dairy sector's call for support by launching a hardship fund. Help came from inside the sector too – cheesemaker Shepherds Purse launched a new Feta-style cheese, Fettle, in order to support sheep milk producers through the pandemic, while Waitrose produced a selection box to ensure small producers could reach customers. Meanwhile, research began into how the lockdown was changing eating and shopping habits, with The Vegan Society finding that Brits were cutting down on meat and dairy, while official figures showed a record proportion of food sales took place online in May.

JUNE
Although consumer confidence in the UK was at an all-time low thanks to Covid-19, a shift to local shopping was becoming apparent. Research by IGD found that younger shoppers were visisting butchers, fishmongers and grocers more often, while older consumers relied on online services. For producers and manufacturers, the government announced a "bounce back" plan designed to help the food and drink industry's Covid recovery.

JULY
The easing of lockdown restrictions led to a rise in retail footfall and a return of consumer confidence. In a boon to the fine food industry, the Farmer Favourability Survey revealed that public support for farmers was at a record high due to their response to Covid – and the government agreed to set up a Trade and Agriculture Commission to support British food standards through future trade deals. Elsewhere, Feltham's Farm scooped the Best British Cheese at the inaugural Virtual Cheese Awards.

AUGUST
Farm shops around the UK participated in the government's Eat Out to Help Out scheme in order to boost sales at local eateries and revive the economy, which had just fallen into a recession for the first time in 11 years. However, as local lockdown restrictions were put into place, shopper confidence began to show regional differences.

SEPTEMBER
The popularity of online retail continued to grow as the UK approached Christmas, with data from OnePoll showing that 77% of people now do at least some of their grocery shopping online. Meanwhile, the debate around Britain's future food standards continued – but support for farmers remained high. Research commissioned by Waitrose revealed an exciting rise in demand for locally produced food, with nearly three quarters of consumers wanting to see more retailers source from British farmers.

OCTOBER
Retail footfall was back on the decline, despite the boost from Eat Out to Help Out over the summer. But while small businesses urged the government to provide more economic support, wholesalers said the entire supply chain was at risk of collapsing if they didn't receive help.

NOVEMBER
Despite a month-long lockdown in England, grocery sales exploded in the run-up to Christmas. Research by Kantar revealed record spending of £10.9bn over the month as restaurants and pubs closed, leading more consumers to cook meals at home. It came as the government announced that consumers could form "Christmas bubbles" over a five-day period in December.

DECEMBER
Brexit took the spotlight off Covid-19 as the end of the transition period approached on 31st December. While the majority of food and drink businesses were still unclear what impact Brexit would have on their businesses, the sector sought to prepare for increased disruption in the new year, whatever the outcome.

GODMINSTER

The Nation's Favourite Organic Product*

Back in stock for Valentine's 2021: the award-winning Heart-Shaped Vintage Organic Cheddar and Heart-Shaped Black Truffle Vintage Organic Cheddar.

Available as individual items or in our *new* Heart to Heart Gift Box.

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* As voted by the BOOM (Soil Association) Awards, 2019 - 2021



"Hello 2021, my old friend"



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES

"The simple business of designing and making a product which does what you said it would and delivering it to the person who ordered it, on the day you promised, for the price you agreed, and then collecting the money and recording the whole transaction somewhere where you can find it and stay in business requires quite a number of separate bits of efficiency."

These wise words belong to Anthony Jay and can be found in his book *Management and Machiavelli*. Considering they were published in 1967 they seem relevant equally today, if not more so, than the 1960s. The book was a recommended text for undergraduates in the 1970s – and possibly should be one for anyone who runs a business.

The only words I would add to his statement would be "and keep doing it over and over again come rain, shine or pandemic". For the costs of running a speciality food shop in a high profile location with rents, rates, service charges, staffing costs, insurance concerns and professional expenses dictate that the 'separate bits of efficiency' need to be successfully completed over and over again.

In many ways 2020 forced us back to basics. Closing unproductive parts of the business, clarifying core values, simplifying communication and reviewing product listings to name a few. Maintaining an optimistic attitude while surrounded by the distractions of a hostile trading environment is a challenge in itself.

The year, in fact, got off to a promising start with sales at Partridges up in January by 6.5% and then in February by 18%. February was helped by not only being a Leap Year but having five Saturdays – our best trading day of the week.

Then on 23rd March we had Lockdown 1. Sales rose dramatically. It was Christmas in March. There was panic buying and we sold out of all the basics. Overall for the month we ended up being 11.3% up on the previous year. On the downside, 20-plus staff were self-isolating and it became challenging to keep open. These were very anxious days. For April sales rose by 3.2% as things settled down. The specific location of individual shops was of imperative importance. I believe only ourselves and Boots remained open at our end of the King's Road, and the area sadly resembled something of a ghost town with no passing ghost trade.

Our café remained closed throughout the lockdown in line with everyone else, and sales were down in May by 3% and June by 2.6%. There was no early summer bounce at all. No Flower Show, no King's Road vibe and no fetes nor festivals. Things got decidedly worse for us during the Eat Out To Help Out scheme, when restaurants opened. Customers returned to hospitality or second homes and our wine sales and take away offerings suffered.

With no overseas visitors this year takings dropped in July and August by 16.5% and 12% respectively. September was down but by just under 1%. To complete the year October showed a rise of 3.2%, November of 1.4% and as I write this we are exactly neck and neck with last year's sales. Overall for the year we will be pretty much level with 2019.

As the renowned philosopher Sir Karl Popper once wrote: "Optimism is a duty". In speciality food we have so many other duties to perform – but perhaps this is the most important of them all.

Best wishes for 2021.

7 food and drink trends for 2021

After Covid-19 shook up the food and drink industry in 2020, *Speciality Food* spoke to food and drink wholesalers, distributors and retailers to find out what's on the menu for the coming year.

1 INDULGENT TREATS

Recessionary food trends will kick in this year, so consumers will be seeking out treats. "When times are tough, confectionery and chocolate products perform incredibly well, acting as comforting treats at home. Patisserie and small luxuries will also be at the top of everyone's shopping list for the foreseeable," says Paul Hargreaves, CEO of Cotswold Fayre.

Henry Amar and Rob Amar, chair and MD of RH Amar, agree that speciality food will thrive even as tough economic times continue. "There is no doubt that 2021 will be a tough year, with household incomes squeezed and high levels of unemployment. As consumers give up the expensive purchases (the new car for example), they console themselves by spending money on food treats."

2 HEALTH – FOR US AND THE PLANET

The pandemic shone a light on health in 2020, and 2021 will build on last year's buying trends – but Al Overton, buying director at Planet Organic, says that this will go hand-in-hand with purchases made for the health of the planet and community.

"Covid, along with the growing awareness over plastics, has somehow brought home the message that our health is fundamentally tied up with that of our planet. Meanwhile, 2020 was a year of both connection and disconnection with people," Al said.

3 VEGGIE 'MEAT' SNACKS

The vegan diet took centre stage last year, and that's likely to continue in 2021 as more consumers adopt a plant-based lifestyle or a flexitarian approach to eating. Whole Foods pointed to veggie jerky as a prime area for innovation. "Now all kinds of produce from mushrooms to jackfruit are being served jerky-style, providing a new, shelf-stable way to enjoy fruits and veggies."

4 HARD SELTZERS

Paul says the "biggest" category approaching the food and drink industry with new products is the hard seltzer micro category. "A new trend originating in the US, I think we'll be seeing a lot more of these brands and variants enter the market over the coming months.

According to Whole Foods Market, however, the most exciting area is in alcoholic kombucha. "Hard kombucha checks all the boxes: it's gluten-free, it's super bubbly and can be filled with live probiotic cultures."

5 LONG-LIFE FOODS

After the panic buying seen during the early days of the pandemic, it's no surprise that ambient goods performed well across 2020, but Henry and Rob say the trend for tinned fruits and vegetables will continue.

"In the first 10 months of 2020, our sales of Del Monte canned fruits have tripled compared to the same period in 2019. Our sales of D'aucy canned vegetables have doubled, and our sales of Mutti tomato products are up by 250%. We see this trend continuing in 2021," they say.

6 ONLINE SHOPPING GOES LOCAL

"I expect to see more independents getting involved with click and collect, e-commerce and moving online," Paul says. "There's a real opportunity here and I'm surprised some haven't been faster to act already."

Al said that Planet Organic's own experience in 2020 shows that the valuable opportunity for retailers to increase their digital footprint. "That e-commerce boom saw us introduce nationwide delivery for all products, including fresh and chilled items, in effect the same service as larger supermarkets, but with our focus on nutrition."

7 AT-HOME DINING

There's no end in sight to the home cooking trend, and with people continuing to work from home this year, consumers will be looking to replicate restaurant meals and liven up their breakfasts and lunches. "The pandemic really has been habit changing, with consumers recognising that they can buy good-quality, tasty food for less, and enjoy it in the comfort of their own home," Paul says.

"2021 may become the year we say goodbye to the traditional meal deal style lunch of sandwiches, crisps and a drink," says Paul, "replacing this with more prevalence of soups, hot food to go and snacking platters."

Food sales leap to £11bn

In the 12 weeks to 29th November, Kantar revealed that grocery sales rose by 11.3%, the fastest rate of growth since August.

"November as a whole saw shopper frequency hit its highest level since the beginning of the pandemic, suggesting more confidence among people going into stores," said Fraser McKevitt, head of retail and consumer insight at Kantar Worldpanel. "Those factors contributed to November being the single largest month ever for the supermarkets, with £10.9 billion spent over four weeks."

Independents also welcomed the shopping frenzy, as Mark Kacary, managing director of The Norfolk Deli, explained: "Normally November is a dead month for us, and the first half of December is pretty quiet too. This year however, November was one of our busiest months ever, with 90% of orders being online," Mark said.













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"Driving forward the green agenda"



MIKE CHERRY
FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES

Small businesses want to do their bit to combat climate change and take advantage of a low carbon economy. This needs to be matched by a fair framework for policymakers. In June 2019, the UK government became the first in the world to pass laws requiring the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to Net Zero by 2050, faster than any other economy. Then, in December, the Government announced new plans aiming for a 68 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the end of the decade compared to 1990 levels.

This follows on from the Government's 10-point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, creating 250,000 new jobs. At a time when the UK is getting ready to host COP26 next year, this is a positive blueprint for a post-pandemic recovery. However, gaps remain. For example, despite strict targets for phasing out petrol and diesel vehicles, the UK Government has provided no solution for supporting the affordable development and roll out of more environmentally friendly HGVs. It is evident that a bold, long-term plan of this nature will require some nuts and bolts to make work, providing businesses with a clear pathway to change.

Despite the policy ambition shown by multiple governments, the Committee on Climate Change has warned that Britain is on course to miss its climate target without more action. So, as the ambition increases, Government must introduce environmental policies that are measured, proportionate and timely. This will give businesses a fair chance to adapt, thrive and grow in a low carbon economy.

In November, FSB joined with business representative groups across the economy to highlight the need to achieve a 'Just Transition' to Net Zero that empowers all businesses – large and small – to play their part. Working with the other major UK business groups – the CBI, Make UK, British Chambers of Commerce and Institute of Directors – we called on the Government to take a principles-led approach to Net Zero policy development, and identified five key principles intended to act as a 'fairness test' for policymakers. They are:

1. Fairness of Ambition: Government's climate change policies must be aligned to the latest scientific evidence and demonstrate ambition that matches the reality of the challenge, both in its timescales and its extent.

2. Fairness of Accountability: Government, alongside regulators, should provide coherent and accountable governance and ensure that climate change policies are coordinated.

3. Fairness of Delivery: Government should, where possible, support, empower and incentivise businesses to find their own ways to net-zero, acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach to policy delivery may not work in all cases and that a diverse set of business-led solutions and incentives will be needed.

4. Fairness of Opportunity: Government must provide a level playing field, ensuring businesses of all sizes, in all sectors, across every region and nation, can contribute to a net-zero economy, through their innovations, investments, and markets.

5. Fairness of Cost: Government climate change policies must be affordable and achievable. Government must ensure that the costs of transition to net-zero are distributed equitably among businesses, workers, and consumers, based on their environmental impact, ability to pay, ability to adapt and potential for gain.

In 2018/19, businesses were responsible for around 18 per cent of the UK's emissions, according to Government data. From the smallest sole trader to the largest corporation, in the last few decades, we've seen a stark shift in narrative. Business owners want to go green, they want to make change. They see the benefits, but must be empowered to get there.

That's why the fairness test is so important. Government and business have an opportunity to work together to deliver viable, long-term measures to encourage sustainability, protect society and grow a resilient economy.

HOW CAN MY BUSINESS BE MORE SUSTAINABLE?

Sustainability is key. We recognise that some smaller businesses will need targeted Government support to ensure they are able to assess and reduce their own carbon footprint in a way that is most appropriate to them, bringing the UK one step closer to its net zero target. In the short term, many businesses are already switching to renewable energy suppliers, reducing plastic usage and waste in offices, turning lights off, planting trees and educating and encouraging employees through Carbon Literacy Training.

As the UK gets back on its feet after a year to forget, we will need businesses of all sizes to drive forward the green agenda, to show what they can do to support UK sustainability, and continue to deliver UK prosperity as we head towards Net Zero.

Online initiatives boost indie sales

Britain's independent retailers had a year unlike any in recent memory in 2020. For many, lockdowns and low consumer confidence resulted in reduced sales, and in some cases closures.

But a number of regional initiatives and campaigns are looking to help struggling retailers and SMEs get back on their feet through digital marketplaces and online directories that help consumers to find and shop at their local businesses.

In Leeds, organisers have bolstered the Leeds Indie Food Directory that was originally launched in March 2020 to showcase the city's local shops. Alongside the directory, Leeds Indie Food has launched a shop of products from the region's businesses. "We wanted to create something new whilst shining a light on our amazing indie scene here in Leeds," said Simon Fogal, of Chapter 81, which funded the website. "Over the first weekend, we have seen sales driven via our directory, and the hampers have really helped promote new businesses, too," he said.

Leeds isn't the only area where regional initiatives are supporting independent shops. Hackney Council has urged residents to buy local through its "Love Hackney, Shop Local" campaign, which introduces My Virtual Hackney, a simple, online business directory for the borough that allows businesses to sell their goods via click and collect.

Help Kent Buy Local was a programme established in the early days of lockdown to make it easier for consumers to shop locally. The campaign was so successful, that it expanded into Sussex and Essex as Buy Local South East.

Jill Sargent, business development manager at Produced in Kent, which was behind the initiative, said the response from customers has been helped by a new passion for local shopping. "Customers are voting 'local and sustainable' with where they spend their money, and we're seeing this across the south east."

How brand transparency will drive sales in 2021

As shoppers increasingly seek out ethical brands, communicating sustainability and health credentials transparently is more important than ever. According to research by Innova Market Insights, transparency will be one of the top trends for the food and drink industry in 2021, with six in 10 global consumers interested in learning more about where foods come from.

"Transparency dominates consumer demand in 2021," said Lu Ann Williams, director of insights and innovation at Innova. Mike Hughes, head of research at FMCG Gurus, said consumers are increasingly becoming less trusting of brands – something which the pandemic has intensified. "The recent pandemic has meant that consumers have become concerned about a variety of supply chain issues such as the country of origin of products and the safe handling, storage, and distribution of products along the supply chain. As such, consumers want more information on the products that they purchase than ever before."

But research by GlobalData found that 32% of consumers were confused by on-pack marketing and health claims. Cesar Revoredo, reader in food supply chain economics at SRUC, said, "For many consumers, it is difficult to grasp all the 'standards' behind the information they are bombarded with." Cesar said retailers and producers need to be very active and inventive on how they pass information to shoppers.

> "Consumers want more information on products than ever before"



UK organic exports get the green light

A "significant hurdle" for trade in organic products has been removed after the European Union agreed to recognise the UK's organic sector. The news was welcomed by the industry, which sells £225 million worth of organic produce to the EU every year.

The decision means that the UK's six organic certification bodies will be recognised for 12 months from January 2021, avoiding what had been called an organic export "catastrophe".

NFU organic forum chair Andrew Burgess said exports to the EU are an important part of the UK organic supply chain, and to be able to continue to export to that key market is "a huge relief".

"While not the full mutual equivalency we have been pressing for, this decision should offer short-term certainty for those organic businesses who've been concerned over losing access to this valuable market," Andrew said.

The UK's organic market has thrived in 2020, with demand for organic food post-lockdown reaching a three-year high due to a growing interest in ethical food and animal welfare.

A survey for Organic September, a campaign by the Organic Trade Board and the Soil Association, found that more than 12 million Brits were more likely to buy organic after the pandemic had hit than they were before.

Roger Kerr, chief executive at OF&G (Organic Farmers & Growers), said that only around 5% of UK organic products are destined for the EU market, but "UK organic supply and demand is so finely balanced that the loss of these markets would have undoubtedly had a negative impact on producer returns at a time of considerable economic uncertainty". Despite the good news, Roger said that in the long term there is more work to be done.

"The recognition is only for 12 months, which means that UK organic control bodies will have to apply again this year. And with the implementation of the new EU organic regulation on 1 January 2022, there remains uncertainty around which EU organic regulation equivalence will have to be sought."

THE UK'S **ORGANIC** MARKET **REACHED** ITS **HIGHEST** GROWTH LEVEL IN OVER A **DECADE** AT **9.5%** IN **2020**

SOURCE: NIELSEN SCANTRACK TOTAL COVERAGE FOOD & DRINK SALES



"We can all be part of the solution"



MINETTE BATTERS
NFU PRESIDENT

2020 will go down in history for many reasons. It was the year that, for the first time in generations, we have seen empty shelves in our supermarkets as retailers, food manufacturers and farmers struggled to overcome the challenges presented to our supply chain by the global pandemic. England footballer Marcus Rashford told us uncomfortable truths about children in our country going hungry and relying on school meals for food. It was also the year the UK was set to leave the EU and worked to forge new trade deals for food and farming around the world.

Those empty shelves in our supermarkets served as a stark reminder to us all. Food and its availability is something we have all taken for granted. We have got used to all types of food being available all year round, we have lost touch with seasonality, and despite food being cheaper to buy than it's ever been, people in this country are going without. It is why Marcus Rashford took to social media to tell his story and campaign for change. It is why the NFU campaigned to safeguard our food standards and called for our values of production to be protected against imported food that would be illegal to produce here. And more than one million people agreed. Our petition to protect food standards gained this amount of support in just under two weeks, with chefs like Jamie Oliver mobilising his supporters to unite with our campaign. It is one of the largest petitions of all time and underlines the importance we all place on food.

Food is one of the few things that unite us all, regardless of where you live, what job you have or what your political beliefs are. People rightly care deeply about what food they will be putting on the plate for their family. People care about animal welfare standards, they care about environmental protection and they trust in British farmers and retailers to ensure an abundant supply of safe food.

Never has this been more acutely felt than during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which ultimately has changed the way we think and how we buy our food. Lockdown brought monumental challenges across the food supply chain, not least in the entire closure of our food service sector which was hit on an unparalleled level. The £81 billion UK eating-out market was closed overnight. From the very start the NFU worked with retailers and food service outlets to help manage the redirection of supply and excessive volumes, helping to get food to where the public needed it most. And we have learned from these very testing of times. Those conversations continue, linking producers closer to the food industry, to enable the supply chain to become more reactive to ever changing demands. We want to continue these close working relationships and make sure that British farmers and growers remain the number one supplier of choice to the UK market.

This means prioritising British procurement into our schools, NHS, government and other public services. By investing in the nation's food production system, the government can capitalise on the benefits food and farming delivers for the economy, such as our world leading standards of animal welfare, environmental protection and food safety. We need to maximise the opportunity leaving the EU presents us and place British produce at the heart of government sourcing policies and ultimately get more climate-friendly British food on to plates.

We should do this because the British public values British farming's production standards and care about where their food comes from. We know the vast majority of people (86%) want to buy more British food, based on independent surveys the NFU has commissioned over a number of years.

Farmers are proud to produce world leading ingredients and climate friendly food which underpins the British food and farming sector worth more than £100billion to the national economy all the while protecting and enhancing our natural environment.

British farmers and growers are ready to play their part in helping to ensure everyone has access to an enjoyable, sustainable and healthy balanced diet, whether that is from our supermarkets, in our schools, or when they sit down to a meal in a restaurant. We should be looking at how we can continually build on what farmers can deliver. Would investment between public and private sectors, and crucially, in our water infrastructure, allow us to better manage one of our most abundant natural resources? Could this mean the ability to grow more fresh fruit and vegetables, or other crops, here in the UK? This will need vision, determination and joined up thinking but the possibilities are endless.

By backing British farming, we can all be part of the solution. Farmers are ready to tackle the challenges ahead; to make the most of new opportunities to improve productivity and animal welfare, to encourage innovation and produce more sustainable, climate-friendly food; food that's available for everyone.

PRODUCT NEWS

Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Peter's Yard unveils new Sourdough Bites

Popular Swedish-inspired bakery brand, Peter's Yard, is set to launch its new Sourdough Bites range into speciality stores.

Made using carefully selected natural ingredients – including Shipton Mill flour, British rapeseed oil and the producer's signature 16-hour fermented sourdough starter – and no artificial colours, flavours or preservatives, the Bites are hand-baked until crisp before being generously seasoned. They are also low in saturated fat, containing 60% less fat than regular potato crisps, and contain less than 100 calories per 26 gram serving.

The new Sourdough Bites are available in three flavours: Suffolk Cyder Vinegar & Sea Salt and Anglesey Sea Salt & Cracked Pepper, both of which are vegan, and West Country Sour Cream & Chive.

Wendy Wilson-Bett, co-owner of Peter's Yard said, "We have developed the new range of Peter's Yard Sourdough Bites with exactly the same care and attention that went into developing our original range of crackers. We also had the same target market of discerning food-lovers in mind so we are confident they will sell very well in independent and specialist food retailers where people are already very familiar with the brand.

"We use the same signature sourdough that we use in all our products and have selected natural British ingredients with provenance, such as Suffolk cyder vinegar and Anglesey sea salt. Our consumer research confirmed that Peter's Yard fan's love the new format and flavours extending the brand they love into the completely new usage occasion of snacking."

petersyard.com



Cambrook upsizes its award-winning nut mix

Hampshire-based premium nut producer Cambrook has announced the launch of a new 140g size of its award-winning Cocktail Mix No.6 bag.

A flavourful combination of salted cashew and macadamia nuts, chilli-battered peanuts, smoked almonds and caramelised sesame peanuts, Cocktail Mix No.6 offers a unique combination of salty, sweet and smoky flavours that make it a delicious accompaniment to quality beverages.

"We are absolutely delighted to be adding a new product to our 140g range: our 3 Star Great Taste Award-winning Cocktail Mix № 6," said Deborah Bradfield, sales and marketing manager at Cambrook Foods. "We launched our 140g range in 2020 and have been thrilled by how well they have sold, especially in such an unusual climate. There seems to be a great appetite for excellent products with genuine provenance in 2020 and we are happy to be part of this continuing trend."

cambrookfoods.co.uk





Indie Bay releases new Pretzel Thins

Quality pretzel producer Indie Bay has released Pretzel Thins, which it is presenting as a challenger to the conventional crisp market.

The crunchy, oven-baked pretzels offer the flavour, crunch and convenience of a crisp with 70% less fat and 100% more protein. Indie Bay's Pretzel Thins are also all-natural and vegan-friendly.

Dafna Bonas, founder of Indie Bay, said, "For speciality food retailers, we understand that customers expect more from their snacks – plant based, natural ingredients, protein, and fat content matter.

"At Indie Bay, we want to give speciality food customers the opportunity to make smarter, healthier choices, without the added guilt. Our new Pretzel Thins are a new twist on classic crisps, offering crispy bold flavours, satisfying crunch and convenience, but with 70% less fat and 100% more protein than crisps, they're lighter, natural, plant based and packed with benefits.

"As a brand, we're not about the latest health fads, but about reimagining classic snacks that people know and love – snacks that have stood the test of time – to reduce the fat, increase the benefits and deliver on natural plant based ingredients, all whilst packing a tasty punch."

indiebaysnacks.com

Rollagranola adds Organic & Nutty to range

Small-batch granola-maker, Rollagranola has added to its range of health-conscious granolas with the launch of Organic & Nutty.

A well-balanced blend of organic brazil nuts, cashew nuts and almonds with oats, raisins, coconut, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, Organic & Nutty is a delicious breakfast or snack option for health-conscious shoppers.

As well as being gluten-free, refined sugar-free and suitable for vegans, the blend is the first organic product in the Rollagranola stable.

Sean Longden from Rollagranola said, "The organic market has been growing year on year however it still plays a relatively small role in the UK. We champion natural ingredients and see organic as something to aim for as the less we mess about with our food, the better! Organic sets a good precedent and is something we've wanted to develop for a long time. Despite the price of organic ingredients being prohibitive, we now have the scale that allows us to make an organic granola that doesn't scrimp on quality or nuts and more importantly, doesn't cost more than the rest of our range."

rollagranola.com







Authentic vegan pie hits UK market

Grateful Pies has launched into the British fine food sector, offering a vegan-friendly centrepiece option inspired by a family recipe.

Designed to feed six, each Grateful Pie contains a unique blend of green lentils, Bramley apple, onion, celery, mushroom, potato and aromatic spices within a light olive oil crust.

Surprisingly versatile, customers can serve a Grateful Pie alongside padron peppers for a taste of Spain; lime pickle, raita and onion bhajis for a nod to Indian cuisine; or with traditional sides as a Sunday roast centrepiece.

Farika Holden, founder of Grateful Pies, said, "Following the discovery of my grandmother's recipe over 20 years ago I have been showing my gratitude to friends and family with this pie ever since. I have always believed in the sharing of food as one of the most significant ways to show love and friendship and this feels like the right time to extend this sentiment outside my kitchen; it resonates with how families are coming together to eat and the act of showing compassion and generosity."

"On my first day of shop drops to independent grocery stores I have been totally blown away by the enthusiastic reception from retailers. It's lovely to finally be able to share my pie with the public."

gratefulpies.com



The Savourists present savoury snack bars

Challenging the notion that snack bars need to be laden with sugar, The Savourists have launched two savoury snack bars into the UK market.

There are two flavours in the range: Black Olive & Nori Seaweed and Sundried Tomato & Herb, both of which contain puffed quinoa, puffed amaranth and sunflower seeds, as well as high levels of fibre and plant-based protein. The umami-rich bars contain no added sugar, are gluten-free and are suitable for vegans.

Harry Turpin, founder, said, "At the Savourists we are on a mission to shake up the on-the-go snacking aisle with an exciting savoury snack bar. We have seen increasing demand from consumers for a more sophisticated snacking experience. The category is littered with sweet, date based products that have evolved from confectionery and are now masquerading as 'health products.'

"The category is crying out for the next round of innovation, and that's where The Savourists come in. Bridging the gap between crisps, popcorn and sweet based snack bars, we are here to liberate snackers from the tyranny of sweet – one deliciously complex mouthful at a time – signalling a new era in savoury satisfaction."

thesavourists.com





New eco launch from The Real Olive Company

The Real Olive Company has launched a new 1kg recyclable format for its range of 15 marinated olive blends, in line with the business's long-term plan to improve its sustainability credentials and reduce its usage of single-use plastic.

As well as being recyclable, the new packaging is robust and resealable, as well as mess-free and easy to pour – making it suitable for use on deli counters and in foodservice operations.

There are 15 fresh blends available in the range, with the olives marinated in a wide variety of ingredients including fresh herbs, citrus and aromatic spices.

Karin Andersson, co-founder of The Real Olive Company said, "Targeted predominantly at food service, farm shops and delis, we have developed a smaller sized resealable and fully recyclable pouch to help save space, cut waste and be easier on budget during these unsettled times.

"Our purpose is to make life taste better by connecting people to the natural vitality of real food and we believe these easy to use sustainable pouches does exactly that – they're vegan, plant-based and gluten-free, completely natural and totally delicious! In essence 'Love Life – Eat Real'!"

therealolivecompany.co.uk





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TIME FOR TEA

Working-from-homers are lingering over a brew and trading up in quality, reports Sally-Jayne Wright

Years ago, Trend Watch's dental hygienist was gazing deep into my mouth. "Are you self employed?" she asked. Apparently, home-workers drink cuppas throughout the day and dentists see the evidence. Ouch.

Fast forward to Lockdowns I and II, 2020. The rise in sales of teapots, plus breakfast and afternoon tea goods, suggested consumers were lingering over, even ritualising, their meal and refreshment breaks. Putting the kettle on calms you down.

HOW CAN A DRINK CONTAINING CAFFEINE – EVEN IF HALF AS MUCH AS COFFEE – BE CALMING?

Tea contains L-theanine which elevates serotonin and dopamine levels. It relaxes you and mitigates the effects of caffeine. That's why you feel both revived and soothed after a cuppa.

I HEARD SALES OF BLACK TEA IN BAGS WERE DROPPING.

Right. Retail sales volumes of mass-market black tea dropped in the five years to 2019, but the value sold rose over the same period because many buyers traded up to premium versions (Euromonitor). Such was the effect that a year ago, Unilever considered selling its Lipton and PG Tips brands.

I SUPPOSE EVERYONE'S DRINKING COFFEE NOW?

You'd think so with all the hype about baristas and flat whites, but it's more the case that tea has not benefited from coffee's product differentiation and marketing support. While tea companies launched more profitable lines including cold infusions and iced tea, a more affluent, educated, young and health-conscious tea drinker traded up in quality.

WHERE ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES?

We see four types of drinker: connoisseurs, alcohol avoiders, immune-boosters and adventurous gourmets. Connoisseurs enjoy the ritual of pot on tray. Premium tea company, Jing, saw sales of its one-litre capacity tea-iere jump 73%, year on year, between March and November, and its porcelain tea infuser sales grow by 108%.

HOW DO I APPEAL TO THESE FUSSPOTS?

Remind them home-brewed tea tastes better than tea at a high-street chain because the water hasn't had all the oxygen boiled out of it. Then stock up on Earl Grey and Great Taste Award-winning loose leaf teas; and launch a tea of the month and complementary cake, biscuit or savoury snack promotion. Black teas go surprisingly well with spicy snacks such as samosas. Consider a paid-for online tea-and-food matching event.

WHAT ABOUT THE SECOND GROUP, ALCOHOL AVOIDERS?

Over a fifth of Brits claim to be teetotal (2017, ONS), and a third of under-25s. In the last few years, tea-based innovations have greatly improved no- and low-alcohol choice. The new generation of ready-to-drink teas, of which Suki's Black Tea and Peach infusion in 250ml cans is a good example, tastes far better than the sickly sweet, artificially flavoured iced teas of old.

The innovation we are really excited about is sparkling teas in gift-worthy 750ml bottles. The corks pop, the taste is multi-layered and complex, and unlike most soft drinks they work with food. Fortnum and Mason launched their own range in July 2019 and a rosé last summer. Waitrose will be carrying non-alcoholic fermented tea made by the Real Brewing Company.

WHO CREATED SPARKLING TEA AND HOW IS IT MADE?

A Danish wine sommelier called Jacob Kocemba of The Copenhagen Sparkling Tea Company claims the invention because there was nothing in his wine cellar to complement desserts. A selection of different tea leaves is soaked in hot water, then cooled. The makers add grape and lemon juice followed by bubbles.

At the Great Wine Company in Bath, both the Copenhagen Sparkling Tea Green and Sparkling Tea Blue sell well to 25-45 year olds who choose them for baby showers and Christenings. Buy from Enotria&Coe.

> "Many predict that home-working will be a long-term trend, which is good news for tea companies and dental hygienists"

WHAT ABOUT THOSE IMMUNE BOOSTERS KEEN TO STAY HEALTHY?

Appeal to its often younger drinkers by emphasising the purity of its ingredients. Have an anti-viral or immune boosting tea of the month.

Planet Organic says Wunder Workshop's Golden Turmeric Tea, made from at least 50% turmeric root, sells well. Suki Tea reports that green tea is rocketing in sales, and points out that Japanese matcha could have more than double the L-theanine content of black tea, increasing potential for that Zen moment.

AND LASTLY, WHAT ABOUT THOSE ADVENTUROUS GOURMETS?

These probably female consumers may start the day with Rooibos Earl Grey, move on to full-fat coffee, sip rose pouchong mid-afternoon and Tea of India's Masala Chai when it's raining. Motto: keep them interested. Perhaps copy Suki Tea who launched a Work-from-home bundle. For £36, customers received four cans of sparkling iced tea, real coffee, oat milk, Suki's tea of the month plus 50 classic breakfast tea bags.

WILL WORKING-FROM-HOMERS CONTINUE TO MAKE TIME FOR TEA?

Yes, and many predict that home-working will be a long-term trend, which is good news for tea companies and dental hygienists. The bad news for retailers with no online presence is that tea is light and easy to buy online and the popularity of tea subscription services is growing. Study their bestsellers and promotions. If you have a café, identify your drinker types and be sure your tea-to-go tickles their tastebuds.



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SPOTLIGHT ON: DTM PRINT

With its latest innovation, DTM Print offers a convenient way to stand apart from your competitors

Showcasing products at their very best is a vital aspect of the fine food industry, and DTM Print – expert internationally-minded speciality printing system providers – have recently announced their latest launch which can help fine food businesses do just that.

DTM Print, a company of the DTM Group, is an international OEM and solution provider based in Germany. Over three decades DTM, an abbreviation for Data Technology Management, has grown fast from a garage company to a reliable partner and solution provider for specialty printing systems. DTM has been developing individual solutions for printing and computers since 1986. DTM Print represented the US company Primera Technology, Inc. under the name Primera Technology Europe in EMEA for 18 years. Beside its own products, the company works closely with well-known manufacturers, such as Primera, to provide the best possible printing solution. DTM Print sells these products and services through authorized resellers and distributors in Europe, Middle East and Africa.

"With our passion for custom-made solutions we became a specialist for niche products. Since 2013 we have developed print solutions used by well-known manufacturers such as Coca-Cola, Mars and L'óreal," explains Andreas Hoffmann, managing director of DTM Print. "Our goal is to find the perfect match in hardware, software and supplies to put our customers' ideas in print."

Eddie – the world's first NSF and GMP-certified edible ink desktop printer – can do something which up until now was beyond the capabilities of the industry: it is able to print designs onto food items using edible ink.

The latest product from US manufacturer Primera Technology, Eddie is able to move a step beyond the traditional method of printing onto wafer paper or icing sheets – which must then be attached to the food product – by being capable of printing directly onto food such as chocolate, confectionery, chocolate and baked goods up to 89mm wide.

A fast and easy process, the printer is able to produce up to six printed objects every 60 seconds dependent on the design and item size. What's more, the process is entirely automatic and hands-free; the carousel feeder holds up to 12 items, rotates them to be printed into position, they are taken through the printer one by one, and then the carousel feeds the printed item back through to the carousel.



Plus, the ink used guarantees a smudge-free, vibrant finish which can be colour-matched to ICC Colour Standards. "With Eddie businesses are not just limited to round objects, such as cookies. You can print directly onto candy, white chocolate, biscuits, macarons, marshmallows, chocolate lentils, and so much more," adds Katrin Hoffmann, PR manager of DTM Print. "And the printed items will be dry and ready for sale immediately after printing. Meaning, not only are you flexible on what you'd like to print onto, but you also can produce exactly the quantity you need when you need it. For these reasons and more, Eddie is truly a professional, edible ink printer and highly unique in its category."

The importance of safety

While edible ink printers have been on the market before now – and have been particularly popular in the production of cakes and biscuits topped with photo-printed icing – DTM Print's latest innovation offers the fine food industry its first opportunity to utilise such tools with recognised third-party certification. This does away with any concerns around producer liability.

The edible ink used in Eddie printers meets all EU and FDA approval requirements for use within food products, and every other element of the Eddie printer has been certified by the necessary industry bodies and is compliant with all necessary procedures. Katrin explains, "Unlike other printers Eddie has the print head and ink compartment in one cartridge which gives no chance to build up bacteria in ink pipes or fixed installed printheads. If the ink is depleted, the insertion of a new cartridge takes seconds and you get literally a new printer."

The personal touch

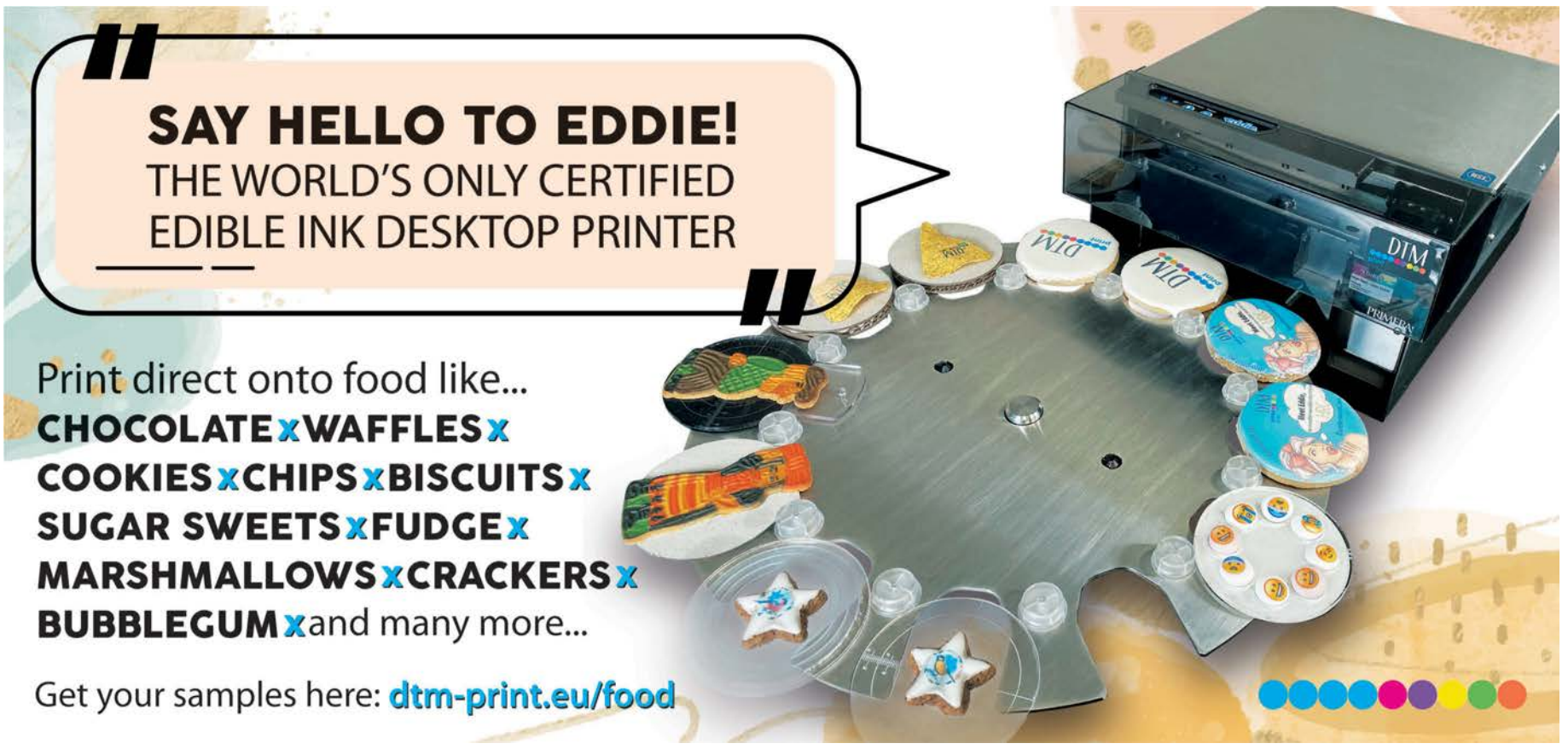
A trend across consumer and B2B sectors, personalisation is a valuable string to add to your bow and can be utilised in a myriad of ways within your business. Whether you choose to opt for special occasion-focused personalisation for consumer products – such as birthdays, weddings or annual nationwide celebrations such as Christmas – or to use the Eddie tool to share your company's image on products to be distributed amongst your customer base and beyond, this additional personal touch is sure to be well received.

Personalised food products are an asset to businesses of all descriptions, and useful as a service to provide customers with as well as a way to merchandise your company at consumer and trade events.

Eddie also allows you to realise the potential of products displaying a tailored seasonal theme; personalised products showcasing an attractive Christmas, Valentine's Day or Easter visual are sure to be popular gifting options during the season in question.

> "Eddie is truly a professional, edible ink printer and highly unique in its category"







SCOTLAND'S LOCAL REVIVAL

After the challenges of 2020, Scotland's food and drink sector proves the strength of its world-class brands

Scotland is known the world over for its food and drink. The country is synonymous with its landscape: lush, green vistas dotted with sheep and Highland cows, seaside distilleries and peaceful lochs. Scotland's rich landscape lends itself to the artisan food scene that has blossomed over the years into a thriving industry – one that is both intensely focused on local provenance, while also being a key player in an important international market.

But like other food and drink sectors all around the world, Scotland's flourishing producers and retailers have taken a hit from the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges that the crisis has brought – shuttered shops, strained finances, scuppered supply chains and an ever-changing list of government guidelines, to name a few – have certainly been a cause for concern, but there have been positive takeaways, too.

"Despite considerable consumer anxiety, we have seen huge demand for quality local food during the pandemic," says Will Docker at Balgove Larder, a farm shop located just outside of St Andrews. "The quality of Scottish produce is one of the only constants that we've seen this year, and it will always stand out as being world class." With the desire for good, local food running high, can Scotland's food and drink industry revive its fortunes?

Adapting to Covid

In 2018, Scotland Food & Drink released its vision for the future: Ambition 2030. Under the plan, the group aims to make food and drink Scotland's most valuable industry by doubling turnover to reach £30bn by 2030. Thanks to Covid-19, these plans have been set back by about two years, according to CEO James Withers. However, he and many of Scotland's food and drink industry players remain optimistic. Scotland's dairy farmers, for instance, were the least impacted by Covid-19 in the UK, according to a survey by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) in May 2020. While over half of respondents had seen some impact on their farming business as a result of Covid-19, just under 5% had seen a "high" impact, considerably lower than the national average of 21%.

Elsewhere, the sector has stayed active through online programmes and events. Bowhouse, a Fife-based group that aims to connect Scotland's small growers and producers with restaurants and shoppers, took advantage of online opportunities in 2020 by launching an online market, Bowhouse Link.

"It's been an extremely challenging year, but many food and drink businesses have shown huge resilience and have been able to strengthen their relationship with their customers," said Rosie Jack, manager at Bowhouse.

The service, which offers independent producers a way to supply local people directly, has seen a strong uptake, Rosie said. "People are interested in buying local food and drink because of the quality of the produce, but also because it helps support a circular local economy."

Retailers have also recognised that shoppers are increasingly keen to enjoy Scotland's local bounty of food. Like many farm shops, Balgove boosted its online business over 2020 in order to continue serving customers during the pandemic. By staying agile, Balgove has been able to stay one step ahead of Covid.

> "People want to feel a connection to what they're eating and drinking, and artisan produce can tell that story"

top quality local produce more than ever before," he added.

Export uncertainty

Demand for Scotland's revered food and beverages comes not only from within the country's borders, but also from export markets, which make up a significant chunk of the UK economy. Scottish food exports have more than doubled over the past 10 years, and the industry is now worth £15bn, according to Scotland Food & Drink. Indeed, Scottish salmon and whisky are among the UK's most valuable exports, with 42 bottles of whisky shipped overseas every second, the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) says.

But in the first half of 2020, the UK's exports fell for the first time since 2015 due to Covid-19. Data from the Food and Drink Federation shows that exports of whisky were down by more than 30%, while salmon exports were 23% lower than the same period in 2019. Scotland's most famous export, Scotch whisky, has faced an additional challenge in recent years in the form of a 25% tariff from the US – its most valuable export market. The tariff was put in place after the US and EU engaged in a tit-for-tat trade war, and according to the SWA whisky exports have lost more than £200m since it has been in place.

Currently, there are 133 whisky distilleries in operation across Scotland, and small producers in particular are at risk if the tariff is not removed. But the UK has an opportunity to negotiate new terms as part of ongoing trade talks with the US, now that it has left the EU.

The UK's departure from the EU is yet another thorn in the side of Scottish exports. Two-thirds of the country's products are shipped to the EU, according to Scotland Food & Drink, and the group says maintaining relationships with Europe will be key going forwards, alongside quickly developing export opportunities elsewhere.

But the group remains optimistic and has created a Recovery Plan programme with the Scottish Government for its farming, fishing, food and drink sector. "The underlying strength of Scotland's brand remains," Scotland Food & Drink writes in the Recovery Plan.

Beyond whisky

So what's next for 'Brand Scotland'? One area that neither Covid-19 nor Brexit can change is the land itself. "We have great quality land, and a huge importance is placed on animal welfare, which shows in our food," says Rory Mellis, director of artisan Scottish cheesemonger IJ Mellis.

While Scotland has always been known as the home of whisky, Rory says that's changing – the food and drink scene is widening. "We are beginning to be more widely recognised for the cheese, fish and meat we produce," he said. "Scotland is so diverse. From beautiful salmon off our coasts to venison from our highlands, there is so much on offer."



Take cheese, for instance. "It's often said our unique climate and geography is why Scotland is a great place for cheese makers and cheesemongers. We have a fantastic variety of cheese styles for a small place, and I don't know many people who live here who don't enjoy a good cheese board," he said. From rich and buttery St Andrews Farmhouse Cheddar to punchy Isle of Mull Farmhouse cheese, there are many native varieties on offer.

"Everything, including Scottish farmhouse cheese, is produced with care, and I think those who are local or those just visiting can see the passion, dedication and love poured into the making of Scottish produce," Rory added.

"People want to feel a connection"

Demand is also rising for local meat and produce, says Will of Balgove. "We produce meat from our own farms and grow much of our own salads and vegetables – but demand has been amazing, and our single-link supply chains have held up brilliantly. This is a real testament to the benefits of localism," he says.

Will credits the revival of local produce to Covid-19's impact on individual lives, which has seen consumers swapping restaurant outings for home-cooked meals. "This year, huge swathes of the nation have actually had time, something that is usually so scarce, and they have used it wisely doing things they love.

"We've seen customers choosing their ingredients with such delight and excitement: be it for a slow cooked joint, trying a new cut on the barbecue or competing in a bake off," Will explains. "The story of where the ingredients have come from is so important in any dish; local sourcing really is the sixth sensation."

> "The story of where the ingredients have come from is so important in any dish; local sourcing really is the sixth sensation"

Rory agrees that shopping habits have changed. "Quality and sustainability are more at the forefront than ever, which is great news for artisan cheese makers and other small business owners," he says. "People want to feel a connection to what they're eating and drinking, and I think artisan produce can tell that story," Rory adds.

Rosie, too, sees that more consumers are now curious about the story behind the food they eat, which plays to the natural strengths of Scottish food and drink. "We've noticed a desire to seek out delicious and interesting produce, with a stronger interest in a product's backstory. Food and drink is always a necessity, but people are more aware than ever before what a pleasure it is, too."

Scotland's food and drink industry has plenty of storytelling to offer, and small producers in particular play an outsized role. "Small producers bring innovation and quality of produce, but they also provide a story: their first hand experience and passion," Rosie says. "This story captures people's attention because people want more than just something that tastes good. They want to hear how something was made, the story behind the product and everything that comes with it."

With a greater appreciation growing both locally and abroad for Scotland's rich, natural larder, local food and drink producers and retailers are proving their resilience.



PRIDE OF SCOTLAND

Wow your customers with our pick of Scottish food greats

ISLAND BAKERY

1 Joe and Dawn Reade have been making Island Bakery organic biscuits on the Isle of Mull for 19 years. Coming in a range of delicious flavours – including the hugely popular Lemon Melts – and with new additions launching in February, 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



ST ANDREWS CHEESE

2 The Stewart family use raw milk from their herd of home bred Friesian Holstein cows to create a range of award winning artisan cheeses including Anster (a crumbly farmhouse); Red Anster (incorporating fresh chives and garlic); and St Andrews (a mature cheddar). Awards for St Andrews in 2018 included 'Best British Territorial Cheese' at Melton Mowbray; 'Best Scottish Dairy Product' at the Scotland Food and Drink Excellence Awards; and Silver at the World Cheese Awards for both Anster and St Andrews.
standrewscheese.co.uk





STAG BAKERIES

3 Based in the Scottish Outer Hebrides, Stag Bakeries is a family-run bakery with a heritage dating back to 1885. Traditional recipes and time-honoured methods remain at the heart of every product their team of skilled craft bakers create. The result is a product range trusted on quality and provenance. Stag's signature Seaweed Water Biscuits were named Best Scottish Speciality Product in 2013. Pairing a classic water biscuit recipe with a blend of three seaweeds, it provides a truly unique flavour full of character.
stagbakeries.co.uk





A HEALTHY OPPORTUNITY

Overlooking the value of food and drink boasting health credentials could be a missed opportunity for indies, as we move into a health-conscious 2021

While fine food independents have mastered their corner of the market when it comes to delicious food and drink, supporting their passionate producers and celebrating their local community, there's a sector which is yet to be explored to its full potential: functional health products. Traditionally considered the preserve of specialist health food shops, products showcasing health-boosting properties have seen a real boost in 2020 – assisted by the pandemic for sure, as shoppers look to protect themselves from ill health – and this trend shows no sign of slowing down.

While the likes of supplements and tinctures may be pushing the envelope a bit too far, there are plenty of food and drink products which share a number of the credentials championed by the fine food sector. Short, clear ingredients lists, proven provenance and quality backed up by science are par for the course in the functional food arena; and with a growing number of shoppers seeking to boost their health in convenient ways which fit easily into their existing lifestyle, functional food and drink offers a potentially valuable new avenue for fine food retailers to discover.

"Following 2020, health and wellness is top of everyone's agenda, and the nutritional benefit and goodness of the food we eat is paramount," explains Dr Craig Rose, founder and managing director of Seaweed & Co. It's up to the food and drink industry to explore ways to give shoppers what they want and need when it comes to health-giving foods, as well as to educate them on the various ways in which they can get involved. The industry is full of products boasting health credentials – from healthy 'shots' and longer drinks from the likes of BumbleZest to Nooro's snack bars – so there's plenty for indies to choose from, and the list is growing.

When it comes to bridging the gap between wellness and fine food, "the most crucial overlap sits with the consumer's desire for everyday indulgence," explains Natalie Bucceri, MD UK and Europe at CBD brand Pollen. "Fine foods have always enjoyed this with a proposition anchored in quality, provenance and sustainability. This is a newer concept for wellness, but the paradigm has shifted and rather than wellness being reserved for a sub-set of the population with a very results-driven mindset, it is now for everyone." Shoppers are now seeing health-boosting products as a new kind of indulgence, she explains. "As consumers seek out wellness offerings, it's less of a chore and more of a personal luxury. A way of rewarding oneself with something positive and nourishing, however one chooses to define that 'something'." While wellness's traditional pillars of exclusivity, functionality and a high price point – as well as seemingly impenetrable terminology – slowly fall, it is taking on the kind of credentials that are familiar within the world of fine food. "Wellness is taking cues from fine foods in delivering on that promise of indulgence by focusing on quality of ingredients, craftmanship, transparency, sustainability and a sense of ritual, all of which I believe make it hard to dismiss and displace as a movement," Natalie explains.

Zoe Lind Van'T Hof, co-founder of Wunder Workshop agrees. "To fit within an independent fine food retailer setting, a wellness product needs to be of a unique quality with an interesting story," she says. Not only that, but indie retailers may be surprised to find that some of the ingredients in such products are familiar and already popular with their customer base. "We can often get caught up in wellness being about the latest innovations, trends and ingredients, but when we take a step back, some of the most common spices such as turmeric and ginger come with so many health benefits. There's an endless array of ways to use them in food, in teas and in tonics." Wunder Workshop's Golden Turmeric is a strong seller for the brand, boasting single origin, 100% organic and ethically-sourced credentials.

An opportunity for independents

Independent fine food shops have long welcomed a customer base which is looking for something different to what they can find in the mainstream retailers, "whether that's based on provenance, flavour or carefully sourced, rare ingredients they might have read about but not seen elsewhere," says Zoe. "We've noticed a significant rise in interest in adaptogenic mushrooms as a food supplement this year. We put this down to various nature documentaries about fungi, and scientific papers proving their varied health benefits." A familiar food which still provides intrepid foodies with an opportunity to explore new opportunities, mushrooms with

THE WORLDWIDE **WELLNESS** INDUSTRY WILL BE WORTH **$1 TRILLION** IN THE NEXT **SEVEN** YEARS

SOURCE: REPORTLINKER

> "CBD's growth has been catalysed by its ability to tap into relevant consumer themes such as wellness, plant-derived, sleep-aid and anti-inflammatory"



> As chronic stress, burnout and general lifestyle-led illnesses have become increasingly commonplace, more people have looked to take a long-term, preventative approach to their health – starting with what they put in their bodies

health-boosting credentials are a natural fit for independent fine food retailers, as is seaweed – an ingredient championed by Dr Craig Rose of Seaweed & Co.

"Seaweed offers excellent benefits to health but is often a forgotten food and still a little daunting to consumers," he says. "For this reason, Doctor Seaweed's Weed & Wonderful offers products that provide the pure sea goodness and health of seaweed in easy-to-use and attractive formats, including nutritional supplements and culinary infused oils."

Doctor Seaweed's Weed & Wonderful infused oils offer the perfect opportunity for independents to offer their customers a culinary experience they'll enjoy, while simultaneously educating them on the health benefits of their key experience.

The wellness credentials of seaweed are so potent that the Weed & Wonderful team also offers nutritional supplements based around the ingredient, including a newly launched variant focusing on immunity health as well as the thyroid function, cognitive and psychological benefits offered by the rest of the range.

"With the multi-award winning culinary infused oils, seaweed is introduced into people's diets in ways they can really love and enjoy too," says Craig. "Doctor Seaweed's mission is to demonstrate to everyone that seaweed isn't weird, it's wonderful!"



The Covid-19 effect

While it's not only Covid-19 that's behind the rise in popularity of healthy and functional foods, it has certainly played its part during 2020 – and its impact is sure to be felt throughout 2021 also. The numbers give us a clear indication of the opportunity we're now facing; according to research carried out by Smartbrief, 29% of shoppers are purchasing more functional food and drink products than ever before. And this is a global opportunity – ReportLinker estimates that the worldwide wellness industry will be worth $1 trillion in the next seven years.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, immunity-boosting products have seen the sharpest rise in sales since the outbreak of the pandemic. Turmeric and ginger, stalwarts of the spice cupboard for generations, are now enjoying renewed importance as an immune booster, while apple cider vinegar – a headline trend for the past few years – is also seeing increased sales thanks to its immunity credentials.

Evolving lifestyles

"As chronic stress, burnout and general lifestyle-led illnesses have become increasingly commonplace, more people have looked to take a long term, preventative approach to their health – starting with what they put in their bodies," says Wunder Workshop's Zoe – and this reshaping of shoppers' lifestyles is at the root of the wellness and food opportunity.

As consumers continue to educate themselves on the health benefits and functionality of everyday foods – such as teas, herbs and spices – they become "more open to experimentation," she says. "The idea that food is a form of medicine, and a vital source of nourishment and healing has become more mainstream. There is simply more demand for wellness food and drink products now than there was before."

The rise of CBD

There have been plenty of headlines centred around CBD over the past couple of years – the latest relating to the early 2021 deadline by which time all makers of CBD products must have applied for authorisation of novel food status – but the interest coming from shoppers is still strong. "CBD is such a dynamic category that is piquing the interest of a growing cross-section of consumers," says Pollen's Natalie. While its effects remain officially unproven, "CBD's growth has been catalysed by its ability to tap into relevant consumer themes such as wellness, plant-derived, sleep-aid and anti-inflammatory, and because of that I'm certain its growth will sustain. I believe it offers an opportunity for retailers to expand and bring vibrancy to their shelves."

When asked if independents should feel nervous about the changing regulatory environment around CBD – and the safety of its consumers – Natalie explains that the industry is "moving towards a clearer framework which puts consumer safety at the core." Thankfully, she says, "most players appear to be stepping into line." Once the CBD sector is fully regulated we're sure to see an explosion in consumer interest, a rise in what has already proven to be an intriguing product category for health and lifestyle-conscious shoppers. "With increased regulation will come certainty and trust, and with that certainty we can establish a strong foundational base upon which to build 'best-in-class'," says Natalie. "Once that bar is set the fun will really begin as everyone works in trying to raise it. It should be win-win for everyone!"

What's next?

While the wellness category isn't anything new – it has been in the UK market for a few years now – it is evolving in ways that could well prove to be a boon for the fine food industry. "Covid has shown us that real nourishment needs to come from good quality ingredients," explains Zoe. "Come 2021, I hope we will see wellness food brands focus more on truly natural products, minimally processed, sourcing ingredients from sustainable farming practices" – all credentials that fine food shoppers are sure to get on board with.



WHAT TO STOCK:
A WELLNESS BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Zoe Lind van't Hof, co-founder of Wunder Workshop



It's best to start with products that are easy to use or incorporate into customers' lifestyles. Teas, spices, honey, chocolate can all be consumed on their own or in a simple dish.

We recently launched a Golden Saffron, working directly with a social enterprise in Herat, Afghanistan, to create sustainable value chains and jobs for women in rural communities. The golden threads hold more than just an enchanting and powerful aromatic flavour, but also an incredible aroma that is a wonderful addition to both sweet and savoury dishes. It is used traditionally as an aphrodisiac, and recent studies have found it useful as an antioxidant and for weight loss.

Golden Turmeric Honey is very versatile, and can be enjoyed simply as you'd normally have honey. Where this is special is that we've combined raw honey with our turmeric powder and coconut oil to enhance its anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory properties. It's a very popular product to support winter wellness.

Our range of Golden teas are perhaps the easiest wellness rituals to adopt into our daily lives – a restorative, relaxing way to unwind.



A THOROUGHLY MODERN INDULGENCE

Chocolate has remained a source of comfort for shoppers throughout the Covid crisis, but the tide is turning towards healthy, sustainable options

While the fine food sector has largely been a beneficiary of 'the lipstick effect' throughout 2020, as the outbreak of Covid-19 led many consumers to tighten their purse strings and opt for affordable luxuries over larger-scale indulgence, the chocolate industry has experienced a particularly clear period of growth. In fact, the phenomenon, which Waitrose has described as "self-treating at home" has seen a tangible boom – according to Kantar, multipacks of chocolate have sold at five times their usual volume.

With this period of small-scale indulgence set to continue for the foreseeable future, how can independent fine food retailers cash in? Sustainable and health-conscious options offer *Speciality Food* readers a profitable new avenue to explore, which are sure to continue to have an impact when things return to the 'new normal'.

A taste of the future

One of the most exciting is the concept of whole fruit chocolate, an innovation from Barry Callebbaut which utilises 100% of the cacao fruit – in effect 'upcycling' the whole fruit with none going to waste. "Up until now 70% of the cacao fruit is discarded as waste, since it was technologically impossible to craft chocolate from the whole fruit," explains Pablo Perversi, chief innovation, sustainability and quality officer, and global head of gourmet at Barry Callebaut. This innovation has sustainability credentials to boot. Indeed, says Pablo, "The Upcycled Food Association (UFA) calculated that if all chocolate was made by upcycling the whole cacao fruit it would reduce the same amount of CO_2 as planting 3.5 billion trees, which is an area as big as Germany and France combined."

This feature could prove to be a valuable selling point when promoting to Millennials and Centennials, an increasingly important segment of the buying public, for whom the sustainability credentials of a product can be the difference between making a sale and not. "Millennials and Centennials are increasingly focused on nutrition, the planet and its people," says Pablo. "They want products that are considered to be healthy and that they can feel good about buying. Therefore, food and drinks need to not only be delicious and nutritious, but must also have a positive impact on the planet and its people. It uses all of Mother Nature's gift: the whole fruit. And therefore farmers have more to sell too."

The health revolution

Not only that, but WholeFruit chocolate offers a healthier alternative to conventional products, too. "It is a healthier proposition since it contains more than 40% less sugar than the most consumed chocolates," says Pablo.

Indeed, the tide is turning away from sugar-saturated and artificially sweetened chocolate products, with innovations rife within the free-from sector in particular. The nation is learning that, contrary to conventional wisdom, chocolate can be a source of nutrition – so long as it is produced with health in mind, and steps are taken to avoid its usual pitfalls. "Chocolate bars and bonbons can be unwholesome and high in sugar and saturated fat. As a high-calorie food, one should enjoy it in moderation. Cacao itself, on the other hand – the purest form of chocolate – is a superfood powerhouse," explains Stefanie Siraghi, founder and director of NOSHY. "It has one of the highest sources of magnesium in nature. It is full of antioxidants – per gram even more than pomegranate – calcium, zinc, copper, selenium, and high in flavonoids that help your body ward off everyday toxins."

However nutritionally-rich a confectionery product is, its purchase will ultimately always have been led by the desire for a pleasurable treat. "Naturally there is a well-being factor of pure joy, satisfaction, and the notion of a small treat [within chocolate products]," says Stefanie. There are plenty of options available for health-minded shoppers. "For a healthy chocolate treat, one may wish to opt for dark over milk chocolate, and the higher the cacao percentage, the better." Within the NOSHY range, single-origin 100% cacao is used within the award-winning GUSTAV chocolate hazelnut truffle. At NOSHY, we choose single-origin 100% cacao for our award-winning GUSTAV chocolate hazelnut truffle. "The origin plays a big part if you're going for high-percentage chocolate; significantly better flavour notes over bulk beans," Stefanie explains.

Chocolate's thoroughly modern combination of great taste, health credentials and sustainability points is a key part of British brand PLAYinCHOC's proposition, also. Its ToyChoc boxes, consisting of a sustainable gift alongside a portion of free-from and organic chocolate, "have been designed as far more





than just a novelty," says managing director Dominic Simler. "Our ethical and sustainable collectable ToyChoc boxes aim to inspire the younger generation about the world around them, whilst exploring and asking questions on how best they can protect and conserve the planet." It's not just PLAYinCHOC's chocolate – free from 14 of the main allergens – which has been produced with the planet in mind. "We have purposely wrapped our chocolates in a plant-based home compostable film for portion control, freshness, hygiene and portability. We also pride ourselves on our packaging, which uses zero plastic and is 100% recyclable."

> "The Upcycled Food Association (UFA) calculated that if all chocolate was made by upcycling the whole cacao fruit it would reduce the same amount of CO_2 as planting 3.5 billion trees"

RETAILER INSIGHT



Emily Burr, chocolate and confectionery buyer at Booths

HOW IMPORTANT WAS CHOCOLATE TO SHOPPERS IN 2020?

I think it goes without saying that chocolate is important to UK consumers, but even more so in 2020, a year when we couldn't go out and see our family and friends, people defiantly turned to chocolate for a moment of indulgence! As a result of the pandemic, our sales of chocolate have enjoyed a real increase.

WHAT HAVE PEOPLE BEEN BUYING?

While chocolate is not an essential item, there's no doubt that it is a source of indulgence and comfort that customers look for in times of uncertainty. With that in mind, consumption patterns in chocolate have changed throughout the course of the pandemic. A trend that has become particularly prominent is that people are willing to spend a little more on brands that they may have previously considered as more of a gifting option. That being said, our core range of chocolate bars has still performed very well and this will always be where the majority of the sales come from.

Dark chocolate has always been a favourite with our customers, and sales of bars above 70% cocoa content have continued to see really good growth. We have quite recently introduced a range of new healthier and vegan alternative chocolate. The sales on these have been very encouraging and show a real change in the types of products that customers are looking for.

WHAT TRENDS ARE YOU EXPECTING TO SEE IN 2021?

Health is firmly on the agenda of all confectionery suppliers, and this is a trend which I expect to remain in the spotlight in 2021. In particular, I expect to see an increase in reduced sugar variants in response to customers seeking alternatives to their normal chocolate treats. Veganism and alternative chocolate bars will also feature heavily.

STOCK CHECK



PURE HEAVENLY SALTED CARAMEL CHOCOLATE

Delicious chocolate notes offset by salted caramel with a melt in the mouth texture. Dairy-free, gluten-free and containing less than 2% sugar.

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VALRHONA GUANAJA 70% BAKING CHOCOLATE

A perfectly balanced chocolate for baking, containing roasted and bitter notes.

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Soft-centred peppermint cream bars, infused with single-estate Black Mitcham peppermint oil and enrobed in the finest dark chocolate.

summerdownmint.com



SUPERTREATS SILKY SMOOTH MYLK CAROB CHOCOLATE BAR

Silky smooth, deliciously creamy and incredibly tasty, these bars are made with superfood carob instead of cocoa and are vegan, caffeine-free, refined sugar-free and organic.

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Manufacturers of quality confectionery since 1879

MEET THE PRODUCER

With a high end heritage and conscious approach, Valrhona's retail range is a boon for fine food retailers

Thanks to its connotations with indulgence and quality, chocolate has long been one of the British public's most popular treats both at home and in restaurants, and Valrhona – a pillar of the fine chocolate industry for generations – has been proud to feed this appetite.

Since its launch in 1922 there has been a huge passion behind every decision that the team at Valrhona make, and every step taken must uphold the business's mission: to imagine the best of chocolate. Valrhona takes its responsibility seriously and is conscious that its procedures have the power to either support or damage the chocolate ecosystem. Says Clementine Alzial, CEO, "At Valrhona, we are convinced that, hand in hand with all actors in the world of chocolate, we can build a sustainable model together that benefits everyone: producers, employees, artisans and chocolate amateurs, while respecting the planet. We can not obtain the best of chocolate if we are not at our best ourselves."

Exploring new areas of taste

Valrhona's mission to explore the ultimate potential of chocolate has been in place since it began trading nearly a century ago, and today's team constantly invents, tests boundaries and innovates in order to bring the very best of chocolate to the world – with 100% of its chocolate able to be traced to the producer. With its passionate team sourcing exclusively from between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn – from countries including Venezuela, Madagascar, Brazil, Ghana, The Dominican Republic and Bali – over 30 production sites from around 20 countries are involved in producing the very best cocoa possible for Valrhona, with harvesting, fermentation and drying all taking place on-site.



The Valrhona range is extensive, consisting of a number of products for retail as well as those produced for restaurant partners. Valrhona offers gourmets the possibility to launch themselves into pastry creations worthy of the greatest chefs. Thanks to the "Chocolate Partner of Chefs", Valrhona allows play with chocolates with diverse aromatic profiles to help pastry lovers produce their most gourmet desserts.

The business's most recent UK retail launch, its Bakery range, offers home cooks the full Valrhona experience: a plethora of flavours and aromas sure to impress and delight the most discerning chocolate lovers. The new retail range of Valrhona chocolates offers a remarkable diversity of tastes to inspire the most delicious recipes. Containing dark, milk, white or blond chocolate, plus the irresistible Dulcey and the fruit couverture Inspiration range, the possibilities for creation are infinite. Each package offers a recipe from the Valrhona School. The tempering techniques for each chocolate are provided, offering a valuable tool for successful dessert-making.

A long-term mission

Valrhona is conscious of the part it plays in the maintenance of a healthy chocolate industry, and the work it does in these areas makes it an ideal fit for independent fine food retailers with an eye to quality and sustainable production, "Valrhona has been engaged in the responsible transformation of its economic and organizational model for several years. The company is working toward a just and sustainable cocoa sector, takes care of the planet and pushes boundaries in gastronomy so that it is more responsible," says Clémentine Alzial, managing director of Valrhona.

Its sustainability efforts focus on three key areas: the defence of cocoa diversity and quality of production; improvement of workers' living conditions; and protection of the environment as part of its role as a founding member of Cacao Forest – an international initiative launched in 2015 which is dedicated to creating a sustainable cocoa sector.

In accordance with its Corporate Social Responsibility Live Long programme, the business puts great emphasis on the importance of sourcing considerately. Throughout its history, Valrhona's sourcing professionals have scoured the globe to find producers of the finest cocoa with whom it can form supportive and long-lasting relationships. A number of these producers are small-scale, family-run businesses which have survived for generations, and Valrhona recognises the responsibility it has in keeping the spirit of collaboration and the delicate ecosystem alive within the chocolate sector.

Valrhona's future sustainability-minded plans also include the creation of a nursery for protected cocoa tree species, in order to safeguard the future of certain aromatic cocoa production, plus it is exploring ways in which it can minimise the environmental impact of its products throughout their lifecycles – for example, by implementing environmentally-friendly packaging designs and products which proactively fight against food waste.

A fine food success story

At nearly 100 years old, Valrhona's success can be attributed to its passion for quality and a long-term outlook, as well its openness to evolving to best support the industry within which it works. Most importantly, the taste and ultimate enjoyment of its products is not diminished by this proactive approach – instead it is enhanced, especially for the discerning fine food consumer and retailer for whom story, provenance and heritage are paramount.





> "Valrhona is working toward a just and sustainable cocoa sector, takes care of the planet and pushes boundaries in gastronomy so that it is more responsible"





HOSTING YOUR FIRST VIRTUAL TASTING

With in-person events off the menu, digital tastings offer cheesemongers a fresh opportunity

Cheese tastings have been an unfortunate casualty of the Covid-19 pandemic, but savvy cheesemongers can still get their products in front of customers by taking their talks online.

Virtual tastings and events not only offer cheese sellers an excellent opportunity to maintain their hard-earned relationships with customers and the perfect platform to share their expertise, but they can also become a viable income stream for their business.

Hosting a virtual tasting for the first time can be intimidating – after all, new technologies can be tricky to learn – and the logistics involved with sending out dozens of packages of cheese is significant. But for those willing to take the plunge, the payoff can be game changing.

Make it interactive

Gemma Williams of The Little Cheesemonger had never held an online event before the pandemic hit, and she admits that if it wasn't for Covid-19, she never would have ventured into digital tastings. "At first I felt really uncomfortable," Gemma says, but after holding her first event she was surprised by how simple it was. "I think they're actually easier to do than a public event."

Without the chattering and organising of attendees, Gemma found the events ran more smoothly. Svetlana Kukharchuk, who runs The Cheese Lady, agreed that online tastings are generally easier to run. "Everybody is in their home, they feel very relaxed, and they don't need to drive."

Plus, in virtual events other experts can join a talk just by dialling in. "For the majority of my events, I like to partner up with another expert in their field," Svetlana says.

"You could do everything by yourself if you wanted to, but it would get repetitive," adds Gemma.

As well as keeping tastings interesting and taking some of the presenting pressure off of yourself, teaming up with cheesemakers, vintners or suppliers of cheeseboard pairings such as chutneys and crackers will add more value for your customers. Stephen Fleming of George & Joseph, who has adapted virtual tastings into his business model, says that attendees appreciate hearing from the people behind the cheese, wine and other foods they're tasting.

"Customers in the call really love hearing from a real live cheesemaker," he says. "It gives a bit more interest, and makes it less of a lecture and more of an interactive event."

> "Customers in the call really love hearing from a real live cheesemaker. It gives a bit more interest, and makes it less of a lecture and more of an interactive event"

Preparation is key

At a virtual event, conversations don't flow as naturally as they do at an in-person tasting, so preparation is even more important. "It's a different delivery mechanism to doing it in person because you haven't got the interaction of having everyone in the same room and people chatting with each other," Stephen explains. "I've had to do more preparation for online events, because there's more of me talking than there would be in a room."

Patricia Michelson, owner of La Fromagerie, agrees. "Don't go off on a limb. Choose a subject that you know about," she suggests. "Stopping and starting and umming and ahhing does not go well in tutorials. You've got to have that flow going. You've got to know your subject and your cheese inside out."

Patricia recommends running a few practice sessions to feel your way around the new format and writing down notes ahead of the event. "Detailed preparation, good notes, and then you're off," she says.

Logistics can also pose a challenge if careful preparation is not undertaken. Svetlana says partnering up with a good courier is invaluable. "Some of them have been a big letdown, and they don't want to deal with perishables, so you just have to find a courier that is reliable," she says.

But even with a good courier on board, things may still go wrong. "You just have to be prepared for that," Svetlana says. "Logistic companies weren't ready for something like this, quite frankly," Patricia adds. "I think logistics have to be rethought now."

In France, she says, Chronopost, which is part of delivery giant DPD, offers tailor-made parcel delivery for food products. "All the chilled stuff, like cheese, meat, fish, all of that can then go overnight, and be much safer rather than an overnight courier, which is ambient," Patricia explains.

"If you had proper logistics in place it would make it much better, and if online is going to be big, we need to address that," she says.

Although there are still some details to iron out with virtual tastings, they offer a fantastic opportunity for those cheesemongers who are willing to try something new to grow their customer base. "I never used any kind of visual technology until this year, but it's been great," Svetlana says. "I feel like now the horizons have expanded for us."

3 TIPS FOR HOSTING YOUR FIRST VIRTUAL EVENT

- Gemma Williams, The Little Cheesemonger: "Don't be too frightened of it. Technology can be unnerving to people, but it's actually probably easier than they think it's going to be."
- Andy Swinscoe, The Courtyard Dairy: "Think about how you can streamline. If tastings sell out, I tend to run another one on the same week of exactly the same tasting."
- Patricia Michelson, La Fromagerie: "When you dial in, introduce yourself and set out a few housekeeping tips, like 'turn off your microphone when I'm talking' and 'when you want to ask a question, either put your hand up or put a message in the comment box'."





Belton Farm launches online cheese shop

Multi-award-winning cheesemaker Belton Farm has launched a new online shop in order to continue serving customers who have not been able to visit the shop due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Located in the Shropshire countryside just outside of Whitchurch, the independent, family-run business will now offer cheese deliveries direct from the farm to their customers' doors.

Since the Coronavirus outbreak first hit the UK in 2020, and as different parts of the country have moved in and out of lockdown, many shoppers have remained wary of making non-essential trips, causing online shopping to flourish.

Belton Farm recognised that some of its customers were unable to shop for their cheeses in person. With the farm's new online service, customers will be able to choose from a range of British classics, organic cheeses or its distinctive take on contemporary modern British cheese with its Red and White Fox brands, all of which are handmade at the Belton Farm dairy. A range of specially selected cheese boxes are also available on the website for gifting.

Belton Farm, which has been family owned since 1922, is known for its classic regional 'Crumblies', such as its Belton Farm Cheshire, Caerphilly and Wensleydale, as well as its Red Leicester and Double Gloucester. Cheese will be dispatched the next day for orders placed Monday to Thursday.

International Dairy Awards announces UK's largest cheese and food weekender

Love Cheese Live is being launched by the International Dairy Awards in 2021 to educate and excite the public about great British cheese.

The group is taking a field to fork approach, with a huge array of foods such as plant-based products, meat, fish and herbs, in addition to artisan cheese and dairy products.

Commenting on the new event, Linda Lewis-Williams, creative director at the International Dairy Awards, said, "Lockdown gave us the opportunity to evaluate the awards. We needed a consumer platform that would educate consumers to understand the value of the International Cheese and Dairy awards logo on pack.

"By creating Love Cheese Live we have a brand name that resonates with consumers and an event that will support quality and provenance," Linda continued.

The weekender will be held 2nd and 3rd July 2021 at Staffordshire Bingley Hall directly after the judging of the awards.

"We have already signed one of the UK's leading retailers and many prestigious dairy and food brands. Love Cheese Live is planned to be the UK's largest cheese and food weekender and it will showcase the very best the industry has to offer," Linda added.

The Awards is also introducing the Cheese Board Awards this year to celebrate the best in cheese accompaniments, where more than 200 small and artisan producers from across the world will be showcasing, sampling and selling their products.

CHEESE FACT FILE...

GREENFIELDS DAIRY CRUMBLY LANCASHIRE CHEESE

- **Country of origin:** UK
- **Region:** Lancashire
- **Tasting notes:** A fresh, slightly acidic flavour with a smooth and moist texture.
- **Awards:** Supreme Champion at the International Cheese Awards Nantwich 2015.





NEWS IN BRIEF

ARTISAN CHEESEMAKER CROWDFUNDING TO SAVE BUSINESS

Hamm Tun Fine Foods has launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise £40,000 in order to save the business from closure. The award-winning creamery, which is based in Northamptonshire, has been making its range of blue, soft and hard cheeses since 2013, but the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have taken a toll. "We don't see any other way of surviving other than to ask for help," explained owner Gary Bradshaw.

LINCOLNSHIRE CHEESE SHOP INVESTS IN DIGITAL

Chuckling Cheese secured a £250,000 investment to boost its online presence and create 12 new jobs. Although the cheesemaker lost all of its event turnover this year, owners Stuart and Emma Colclough saw a 1,000% surge in online sales over lockdown. The funding from First Enterprise will help fund the launch of a new website and a build-your-own hamper subscription service.

Tributes paid to Wensleydale's David Hartley, who died aged 58



David Hartley, the managing director of Wensleydale Dairy Products, died on 2nd December aged 58 following a year-long battle with cancer.

In a statement, the company said he will be "terribly missed by all his friends and colleagues at the Wensleydale Creamery".

"Each and every day he injected passion, quality and enthusiasm into both his business and personal life," the statement said.

David played an instrumental role in the management buyout that saved the Creamery in 1992. He stepped back from the day-to-day management of the company last winter after he was diagnosed with cancer.

"Over the past 28 years, under his direction, the business became an integral part of the local community, with coveted recognition for its award-winning range of cheeses," the statement continued.

In 2019, David took home the prestigious John Beckett Memorial Cup at the Cream Awards, recognising his work in the dairy industry. "Alongside the management team, David cemented Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese as a household favourite, both in the UK and internationally," Wensleydale said. "David was a devoted family man, and our thoughts are with his wife, two daughters and family, who have asked for privacy at this difficult time."

Jill McMullon, chair of Hawes and High Abbotside Parish Council, the town in North Yorkshire where the Creamery is based, told *Richmondshire Today* that the news of David's death was "greatly sad and a real shock in Hawes".

"He was highly regarded, not least among his staff who I know are devastated by the news. Wensleydale cheese is world renowned thanks to his tireless hard work and the news is a bitter blow."

MOZZARELLA HAS SEEN THE **LARGEST** GROWTH IN YEAR-TO-DATE **EXPORT** VOLUMES, SHIPPING **62%** MORE BETWEEN **JANUARY** AND **SEPTEMBER** THAN LAST YEAR. **CHEDDAR** HAS ALSO SEEN **GROWTH** OVER THIS PERIOD, EXPORTING **7%** MORE VOLUME

DATA: AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

"The quality of British cheese is one of the best in the world and demand has been increasing. In 2019 the United Kingdom was the 11th biggest exporter of cheese. While some markets have taken a hit during the pandemic, those that have grown serve to reflect the sustained demand for British cheese even during challenging times"

JAMES MONK, DIRECTOR OF COMMERCIAL SERVICES AT BUSINESS WEST



COMMENTATORS



GEMMA WILLIAMS
THE LITTLE CHEESEMONGER



JEN GRIMSTONE-JONES
THE PANGBOURNE CHEESE SHOP AND CHEESE ETC



CLARE JACKSON
SLATE CHEESE



HOW TO CREATE AN ENGAGING CHEESE DISPLAY

Ensure your cheeses are looking as good as they taste by upgrading your presentation skills

Looks have always mattered in the world of cheese, but in the time of Covid-19, they're more important than ever. Tastings are out, which means customers are shopping solely with their eyes.

Indeed, with the pandemic limiting the number of customers allowed in small shops at one time, ramping up the wow-factor with an innovative set-up is a great reward for those who make it through the queue. What better way to start the new year than by refreshing your cheese display?

Choose your equipment

There are a number of ways to display cheese, but when working out what's right for your shop, the main factors to consider are size and budget. At the top end are entirely refrigerated cheese rooms. These can be brilliant for creating immersive cheese displays, but if you're hoping for customers to dwell in your shop, they can get chilly.

The more typical options for farmhouse cheese shops and delis are multideck chillers, which encourage browsing and take up little space but can risk drying out cheeses, and serveover displays, which are versatile but can be on the bulky side. Each set-up has its positives and negatives, so to create your bespoke display, it's important to consider which are the key factors for your shop. Gemma Williams, who owns The Little Cheesemonger, opted for a multideck chiller to suit her small store. "To use every nook and cranny, we squeezed in glass fronted fridges under the counters, too," she explains.

As Gemma expands into a new, larger shop this year, she'll be taking advantage of the space to get creative with new ideas. "The new shop will have refrigeration units on the ceiling so we can have our cheese out on the counter, and a cheese maturing room on view to the customers through three large windows."

Jen Grimstone-Jones, of The Pangbourne Cheese Shop and Cheese Etc, is similarly restricted by space, but she has solved this problem with two interconnected serveover fridges – the classic deli set-up – so shoppers will zero in on her best-selling cheeses. "The key selling space is in the centre of the counter," Jen says. "This is the point that customers will gravitate towards, and we have our local cheeses in this area."

Make an impact

Presenting your cheese in a dynamic and eye-catching way is the key to a next-level cheese display. To ensure that your shop won't be forgotten once the customer leaves the store, think about your USP.

Slate Cheese in Suffolk is known for its 'wall of cheese' which is made up of a series of vertical fridges. "This presentation was inspired by a cheese shop that my family and I visit on holidays in the French town of Chamonix," explains owner Clare Jackson. "Here, chilled shelves up to the ceiling are stacked with weighty rounds of Beaufort and Comté, alongside Alpine classics such as Morbier and the freshest of local goat's cheeses."

Gemma also finds that vertical arrangements work best for capturing shoppers' attention. "I don't like flat displays of cheese. The colours blend and it's difficult for customers – and me, sometimes – to differentiate them," she explains. "For me, it's the same at the book shop when they lay all the books on the table. It's not easy to take in what's available. I chose a multideck because the shelves are shallow, so it's more like looking for a book on a shelf and easier to browse."

Without a multideck, a similar effect can be achieved by stacking cheeses on blocks or even using the cheeses themselves to create different heights that draw in the customer's eye. Large rounds of cheese create a big visual impact, but it's just as important to break down cheeses to show off what's inside. "You can cut a wheel of hard cheese into half and then in two quarters and create a stack, which always looks eye-catching," Jen says.

> "Each cheese is placed like it's a piece of art, because that's really what they are"

With Covid-19 limiting customers from handling products, it's critical that cheeses aren't hidden from view, so stacking to different heights can create a useful workaround.

Create a flow

When it comes to choosing an arrangement of cheese varieties, Clare considers how the customer would naturally browse the shop's shelves. "Within the Slate wall of cheese, we organise the cheeses by style so that customers can navigate the selection easily to find a particular cheese, or create a balanced cheese board with a choice from each shelf," Clare says.

Take a shopper's-eye view of your store to ensure your local cheeses and best sellers are situated in an easy-to-access prime position. And while it's wise to keep the general layout of varieties constant so as not to confuse regulars, changing up the cheeses on display can be an effective way of pushing customers out of their comfort zones.

"The particular cheeses we showcase in the wall of cheese rotate," Clare explains, "so that alongside old favourites there is always something new for a customer to discover, perhaps a new cheese, a recent award winner, or simply one that is tasting particularly delicious at the moment."

With your display organised, consider how you will communicate about your chosen cheeses with customers. Clear signage is an important sales tool, especially with shoppers who are unfamiliar with the different varieties you offer. Include cheese name and type, as well as any other pertinent information, such as milk type, place of origin, vegetarian versus animal rennet and texture.

Beyond the key information, there is also an opportunity to get creative with signage to prompt conversation and aid in the flow of your shop.

Adding facts, reviews or backstories to particular cheeses and producers that you feature can all assist in building an emotional connection with your customers, which helps to turn a browser into a repeat customer.



> Through our work with cheesemakers, we are deeply conscious of the care that has been put into the making and maturing of each cheese. It is important that we continue this hard work

Handwriting signs and labels offers a way for cheesemongers to add a personal flair to their display. "One of our team members is an illustrator, so she often creates extra blackboards which we prop up next to cheeses in the counter," explains Jen. Imaginative and informative displays spark interest, especially when customers aren't able to handle the products.

Keep it fresh

Just as important as the big picture of your cheese display are the little details: the state of each individual cheese can have a significant impact on sales. Because cheese is itself a living product, it demands extra care and attention to look its best. "Through our work with cheesemakers, we are deeply conscious of the care that has been put into the making and maturing of each cheese before it arrives at Slate," Clare explains. "It is important that we continue this hard work in our fridges and ensure that we have a premium product available for our customers."

"The condition of each cheese is checked on a very regular basis, and where necessary scraped or rewrapped to ensure it is in the best possible condition." she adds. Jen similarly inspects each piece of cheese every day. "They get unwrapped, tidied up and rewrapped so they always look fresh. Some cheeses have a tendency to mould up quicker than others but we have such a good turnover of cheese that we have almost zero cheese wastage," she says.

Temperature maintenance is also key to avoid stripping the flavour of the cheese while still letting it breathe, Gemma says. "In hot dry weather, sometimes I use damp cloths on my clothbound cheese to stop them cracking."



Creating a digital display

Cheesemongers put long hours into creating fantastic displays, but with Covid-19's continued impact on the retail landscape, being able to translate that display to your online shop is increasingly important.

"This year has definitely seen an upsurge in people shopping online," Jen says. "For our website, we used the same backdrop when photographing the cheeses, and our artistic team member draws a lot of images to give the website an engaging feel."

Clare also works to recreate the feel of her shop on her website. "We describe our website as our 'virtual wall of cheese' to try and translate the experience of visiting one of our physical shops to this online space," she explains. "We photograph our cheeses against slate tiles, again linking back to the slate flooring of our shops."

Social media and newsletters also offer new avenues for cheesemongers to connect with their customers when footfall to the shop is low. Gemma often creates videos of her cheese displays for social media. "Things have certainly changed a lot due to Covid-19," she says. "Many of my customers who would normally pop in now either phone, pre-order for collection on the website or have it delivered.

"There is less time for browsing now, with us only allowing two customers in the shop at one time, as everyone is conscious there is someone waiting to come in," Gemma explains. "It makes sense that people want to plan their purchases in their own time, so social media and the website photographs give them the opportunity to do this at their own pace."

Although online cheese shopping is becoming increasingly popular, there are still a steady flow of customers who are keen for the experience of visiting their local cheesemongers and delis to find out what's on offer – and impactful cheese displays are central to the retail experience.

WRAPPING UP

Jen Grimstone-Jones, of The Pangbourne Cheese Shop and Cheese Etc explains why wrapping should be the cherry on top of a great display

"Our cheeses are wrapped in cling film, and we take immense pride in making sure each piece is displayed at its best. I often look around cheese counters in other shops, and the wrapping can be hit and miss. I think if someone has taken the care to wrap a cheese neatly then it gives me confidence in the quality of the product."

"I did an art degree, and displaying the cheese reminds me of setting out my degree work on plinths in London for my final show," Gemma recalls. "Each cheese is placed like it's a piece of art, because that's really what they are."





With almost 30 years of history, "Dimitar Madjarov-2" Ltd. is a family company that has become an established and trusted manufacturer of high quality products for several generations of Bulgarians. The traditional dairy products "Dimitar Madjarov" are produced only from first-class fresh cow, sheep, goat and buffalo milk, obtained only from Bulgarian farms of the first category, fully meeting the European hygiene requirements.

In order to obtain their moderately salty and pleasantly expressed milk taste, white brined goat and buffalo cheeses needs to through a ripening period of minimum 60 days at special conditions.

For a full breakfast or a special occasion with friends, white brined cheeses "Dimitar Madjarov" combine perfectly with toast black bread or honey dressing.

TASTE DIRECT ★ 2021 ★



FORAGE FARM SHOP

BUILDING SUCCESS

Independent farm shops ploughed ahead with business expansions and refurbishments in 2020, proving that Covid-19 isn't holding the fine food industry back

While much of Britain's retail sector was in crisis mode throughout 2020, independent fine food shops found ways to survive – and even thrive – throughout the pandemic.

In fact, Rob Copley, chairman of the Farm Retail Association (FRA) and owner of Farmer Copleys farm shop in Pontefract, says that Covid-19 has made Britain's network of independent farm shops more attractive than ever to both longtime and new customers. "With reliable access to abundant, fresh, seasonal produce, as well as a 'safe' and friendly welcome, farm shops have shone during the past few months," he explains.

Not only did farm shops and delis maintain their business in 2020, but many retailers also had cause to pursue business expansions and refurbishments.

Expand and diversify

Because they were able to trade throughout the pandemic, farm shops and delis were able to make the most of consumers' growing desire for authenticity and provenance in their food – something that the pandemic has intensified.

"Covid has taught us that in times of crises, access to local, fresh food really is essential and a basic human need," explains Rob. "Farm shops have responded innovatively to the situation, with many planning new developments or pushing ahead full force with plans for expansion that were in place pre-pandemic."

Indeed, one business that has continuously expanded throughout the pandemic is Minskip Farm Shop, run by Emma Mosey. In July, when Covid restrictions were eased, the shop opened an on-site egg restaurant, where business boomed until another lockdown forced it to close.

But during the lockdown periods, Emma sought to boost the shop's offering in response to extremely high demand. The team expanded the farm shop into its café space, doubling its retail offering for customers. The shop also doubled the size of its car park due to increased footfall and had a new cold store built.

While the café business has certainly suffered, Emma says that overall Covid-19 has positively impacted the business. "We are still trading at double what we were last year through the farm shop, even without the café open. During the first lockdown, our trading figures tripled due to more customers shopping local, and we were doing a huge number of local deliveries. This allowed us to significantly increase our team, and to offer the customers a greater product range at lower risk." The team at Minskip Farm Shop has gone from seven to 35 during the pandemic.

Elsewhere, farm shops have sought to diversify into more Covid-friendly means of retailing. Betty's Farm, run by John Bowler, has plans to open a fully automated vending shop early this year. "We wanted to create an environment that's as safe and Covid-secure for our customers as possible," explains Lucie Bowler, John's daughter.

"The automated vending system will reduce the amount of physical contact that customers to our shop have with staff, but at the same time they will still be able to meet and talk to our team about the food we sell and the animals on the farm," she continues. While the pandemic has delayed the project slightly due to supply issues with materials, Lucie says it is now back on track.

As well as selling the farm's free-range eggs, the vending shop will offer locally reared meat, dairy products, vegetables, deli items, preserves and sweet treats. "We are in many ways quite lucky with the timing of Covid, as it's given us a chance to assess how we think the future of retail will look and create our farm shop around that vision," Lucie says.

2021 is likely to see even more farm shop expansions, according to Mark Ellis of diversification specialist Appetite Me. Mark assisted with a number of new shop openings last year, including Forage Farm Shop in Wales, which ploughed through Covid disruption to hold a "very, very successful opening" in 2020, Mark said.


FORAGE FARM SHOP

"What we found this year is a lot of farm shops have realised demand has escalated, but in order for you to expand you need to get planning permission. Those are going through at the moment," he explains. Planning systems have slowed down due to the pandemic, as well as the fact that more people are entering the farm shop market than previously.

Taking the leap

The opening of new farm shops and delis has been a regular occurrence throughout the Covid-19 crisis, as keen entrepreneurs who are passionate about good food use the disruption of the pandemic to reflect on their career.

Steven Goodrum opened Broomvale Organic Farm Shop after losing his job because of Covid-19. "I knew I was likely to be made redundant, so I set some plans in motion to invest any redundancy money into the shop," he explains. "The response has been great from the community, with new people coming in each day, and we are now seeing some returning customers becoming regulars."

Kate Southern and her husband Steve also took the leap, leaving their jobs to open Load Street Deli in Bewdley last year. "Opening a local delicatessen business in our hometown had been a dream for my husband and I for many years. We decided to do it this year as the ideal premises became available, and didn't want to miss the opportunity," Kate says.

But although they signed the lease just two weeks before lockdown, they weren't put off by the pandemic. "It slowed us down a little, which gave us more time to refurbish the shop to the high-end look we wanted and we had more time to source the quality

> "Farm shops have responded innovatively to Covid-19, with many planning new developments or pushing ahead full force with plans for expansion that were in place pre-pandemic"





BETTY'S FARM

products," she explains. The response from the local community has been "overwhelming," Kate says. "Everyone has been extremely positive and welcoming. We continually get told that it's so good to have a deli back in the town." The pair are already working on expansion plans for a new dining and entertainment area, too, once it is safe enough to open.

Charlie Hodson, a chef and restaurateur, was running a pub in the countryside when Covid hit. "I sort of knew in the back of my head, that that was it for us, really," he says. But he found a new way to keep his passion for food alive by opening Hodson & Co Cheese Room and Deli in Norfolk, a result of his 10 years of working as a champion for Norfolk and Suffolk producers. "My dream was always 'could I gather all those I've met and worked with, chutney and jam wizards, millers of Norfolk grains, apple squeezing cider-pressers, grape growers and bubbly wine makers, spirit of the county distillers, blade forging magicians, foundry pan makers and chef's apparel providers. The list is simply endless with, of course, cheese churning scientists last but never ever least," he says.

Getting started

For farm shops currently considering how to make the most of the space available to them and assessing what additional space can be created, Rob suggests working with specialists who can look at existing layouts and find ways to make the space work harder. "By working with companies who are specialists in their field, farm shops can feel confident in the decisions they are making for their business, as well as ensuring they are taking all the right steps when it comes to the current situation," Rob says.

Although construction projects were put on hold during the first wave of the Covid-19 crisis in early 2020, the sector is now going full steam ahead, and Mark of Appetite Me says he has in excess of a dozen new projects planned in the next 12 months across the UK, including Marshall's Farm Shop in Aberdeenshire, which is set to expand by about 10 times next year.

"Looking to the future, farm shops that are considering adding new space will require planning submissions and extensive plans being drawn up. Considering the finer details when planning any new development is key, in order to provide a seamless experience for both existing and new customers," Mark advises.

And when it comes to new developments or refurbishments, work should be completed out of business hours so as not to disrupt trade and to limit any issues during the day, he adds.

2020 was a significant year for Britain's farm shops and delis, with many opportunities for businesses to grow despite the circumstances – and these trends are only likely to continue in 2021 with even more expansions and refurbishments on the cards.

"We are hopeful that shopping habits forged as a reaction to coronavirus will last long beyond the pandemic," Rob says.

"Farm shops have clearly demonstrated how to adapt in an ever-changing environment with speed and efficiency," Mark adds, "meeting the needs of their customers whilst future proofing their business".

DIGITAL EXPANSION

Business refurbishments weren't limited to physical spaces in 2020; many farm shops took their trade online for the first time or significantly boosted their digital offering. "Farm shops adapted quickly at the start of the pandemic, adding online retail for customers who were isolating or felt unsafe leaving their homes," Rob says.

"79% of farm retailers polled by the FRA said they had introduced a click and collect service because of coronavirus, including in the form of completely contactless drive-thrus. Another 67% said they had introduced home deliveries," he added.

The East Anglian family-run butchers Powters, for instance, has sought to capitalise on rising demand for quality meat with a new online shop. "We've been working on developing our online shop for some time, but the current timing for our launch couldn't be better," says Tristan Powter. The new service will include nationwide delivery.

"People are now shopping online more than ever before and want to support independent businesses for a better quality product and service," continues Tristan. Combined, these factors create a significant opportunity for local shops to boost their profile in their communities and further afield – all without the need for planning permission.


MINSKIP FARM SHOP



TASTE DIRECT ★ 2021 ★

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

Novel Tea



FREE DISCOVERY PACK
FIRST 100!

It goes without saying that Britain loves its tea – and as the craft and artisan alcohol markets show no sign of slowing down, it's clear we also love our spirits! As fervent fans of all things British, we saw a clear opportunity to combine these two passions, embarking on a journey of discovery to find the world's most perfect tea/spirit pairings imaginable. Blending the highest quality loose leaf teas (cold-brewed to extract a fuller, more rounded flavour) with a range of expertly crafted spirits, our 'Tales' build on Britain's history of culinary innovation to deliver a 'Tea with Spirit.'

Bristow's of Devon

At Bristow's of Devon, we pride ourselves on hand-making our delicious confectionery in the same way as we've produced our Devon specialities – nostalgic fudge, bon bons and toffee – since 1879. Today we invite you to sample three of our top-selling, mouthwatering fudge flavours: traditional Clotted Cream; on-trend Sea Salt & Caramel; and decadent Chocolate Brownie. They are wonderful for a little indulgent treat and guaranteed to please everybody's taste buds, leaving them coming back for more. Better still, they are all vegetarian-friendly.



TASTING SAMPLE PACK
FIRST 100!

Wellside Foods

Wellside Foods is a family-owned and operated company based in Shropshire that provides vegan, vegetarian and organic ambient and frozen foods. Our most popular products include our vegan and organic tagliatelle, plant-based high-protein fusilli and a great range of breakfast foods for those following a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. Established over four decades ago, our company has always placed great importance on acting responsibly towards the environment. Our focus will always be on using high-quality ingredients in our products for our valued customers.



MIXED SAMPLE BOX
FIRST 100!

Ma Baker



MIXED SAMPLE PACK
FIRST 100!

As we welcome 2021, with consumers seeking healthy indulgence to boost their wellbeing, we're proud to launch Ma Baker Superfood snack bars. The Ma Baker brand is well established for its range of high-quality handmade flapjacks, and now we're adding four amazingly tasty fruit and oat bars. Our Superfood snack bars come in four delicious flavours - Apple & Baobab, Apricot & Quinoa, Blueberry & Chia and Coconut & Goji Berry - and are presented in clean, premium packaging to maximise on-shelf impact and reflect their high quality. They are 100% natural and contain recognised 'superfood' ingredients. We don't add sugar, and the bars are palm oil free, dairy free and vegan friendly.

Dimitar Madjarov-2

MIXED SAMPLE BOX
FIRST 100!

With almost 30 years of history, Dimitar Madjarov-2 is a family company that has become an established and trusted manufacturer of high quality products. Its traditional dairy products Dimitar Mad Jarov are produced only from first-class fresh cow, sheep, goat and buffalo milk, obtained from top quality Bulgarian farms which fully meet European hygiene requirements. In order to obtain their moderately salty and pleasantly milky taste, our white brined goat and buffalo cheeses go through a ripening period of at least 60 days within special conditions. For a full breakfast or a special occasion with friends, white brined cheeses Dimi Tar Madjarov combine perfectly with toast black bread or honey dressing.



MIXED SAMPLE PACK
FIRST 250!

Ahmad Tea



Ahmad Tea is a family owned UK tea company. We sell 30 million cups of tea a day in over 80 countries. Our purpose is to inspire the love of tea. We are a proud member of the Ethical Tea Partnership, and strive to bring communities together to help those in need. We do this by donating 20% of our profits to charity.
Discover Natural Benefits; our range of all-natural herbal teas and infusions with added vitamins and nutrients, or our range of premium quality loose leaf teas in biodegradable pyramid bags in a myriad of favours and blends.

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 ofthe 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 2021

TwelveBelow

4 X 200ML SAMPLE PACK
FIRST 100!

TwelveBelow is the UK's first all-natural genuinely low sugar tonic. Sweetened with a dash of organic agave, each 100ml serving contains just 12 calories. There are four flavours in the range: Classic Premium, which is crisp and refreshing with a citrus twist; Rhubarb & Ginger, a true British taste of rhubarb with gentle ginger undertones; Pear & Cardamom, showcasing richly decadent pear with an aromatic cardamom finish; and Apple & Garden Mint, a combination of cool, fresh garden mint with juicy red apple. Each great tasting flavour complements and enhances your spirit to deliver an elevated drinking experience. What's more, every item in the range is 100% natural.



Borderfields

FREE MIXED BOX
FIRST 50!

Borderfields has been making premium cold pressed rapeseed oil since 2005, when a group of like-minded farmers came together. Production of high-quality, simple, tasty products was their collective aim. Borderfields' oils are 100% British and produced in our Nottingham factory using specially selected seed varieties grown exclusively for the company. With a high smoke point for high-temperature cooking and half the saturated fat of olive oil, Borderfields oils are high in Omega-3 and Vitamin E, making them a healthier alternative and a great British all-rounder. In 2019 we started delivering direct to retailers through our Borderfields Big Box, offering a full range of Borderfields oils and infusions including gift packs.





Good Earth

Premium tea brand Good Earth presents a range of expertly crafted loose teas, tea bags and gently bubbling, organic kombuchas. Each item in the range is deliciously different in taste and made using the finest of sustainably-sourced ingredients and the bold flavours of nature. Our teas tempt the eye and taste buds, and our Kombuchas are carefully brewed to be refreshing and gentle on the palate, as well as free from alcohol as they contain <0.5%. We think our products stand out from the crowd and that your customers will love them, but don't take our word for it, try for yourselves.

MIXED SAMPLE BOX
FIRST 100!

Garofalo

PASTA TASTING KIT
FIRST 200!

Pasta Garofalo is offering a free sample of Casarecce pasta, in both traditional and gluten-free options. Garofalo has been making pasta for over 200 years in Gragnano near Naples in Italy, the home of pasta. Garofalo durum wheat semolina pasta offers all the fullness of tradition, enhanced by the choice of superior wheat and an extraordinary taste to boot. Garofalo gluten-free shapes are made to guarantee excellence and perfect cooking resistance, so no one will have to forgo the pleasure of a quality pasta dish. Garofalo carefully controls every aspect of the process until the final result is what the team considers the absolute best.



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TASTE DIRECT 2021

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Do you have a licence to sell alcohol?

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- Dimitar Madjarov-2 ☐

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THE VEGAN QUESTION

The number of plant-based shoppers is rising, but smart selling is required to make the most of the opportunity



COMMENTATORS



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PURITION



CHRIS GRIFFON
YACONVIVA!



GEM MISA
FULLGREEN



MINETTE BATTERS
NFU



TONI VERNELLI
VEGANUARY

2021 could be a landmark year for the vegan diet. In 2020, 400,000 people signed up for Veganuary – a huge jump from the 250,000 recorded in 2019. But 2021 is set to be even bigger, in part due to the impact the pandemic has had on consumers' diets. Research from Mintel discovered that for a quarter of Brits aged between 21 to 30, the pandemic made a vegan diet more appealing. Motivating factors behind the vegan trend vary, with some seeking out the health benefits of a plant-based diet and others more interested in reducing their impact on the environment. "At a time when many feel helpless about the state of the world, Veganuary offers people a way to take positive action," Toni Vernelli, international head of communications at Veganuary, told *Speciality Food*.

Even before the pandemic, the plant-based food sector was on the rise. According to the Vegan Society, the number of vegans in Britain has increased four-fold to 600,000 since 2014. The group also predicts that vegans and vegetarians will make up one-quarter of the population, and flexitarians will comprise half, by 2025. In May, ProVeg International released the results of a survey of over 6,000 consumers, which found that plant-based cheese, ready meals, seafood and egg alternatives were among the biggest opportunities for the food industry.

"The rising popularity of vegan food provides an opportunity for independent retailers to stock more exclusive vegan products, such as artisanal nut-based cheeses, as well as products from new vegan companies that are just launching," says Veganuary's Toni. "These types of items generate a lot of excitement, and January is when there is the biggest audience experimenting with plant-based food." Large supermarkets have certainly taken note of the popularity of vegan products – Tesco has announced that it is investing in expanding its plant-based offering by 300%, and Asda is launching vegan-only aisles into 359 of its stores after having experienced a 275% rise in demand in recent months. In late 2020, Whole Foods Market revealed it is on the hunt for new vegan brands to add to its shelves in 2021 due to continually rising demand.

Brands have followed suit, launching a vast array of products to cater to this increased demand and offer options to vegans and non-vegans alike. "With more vegan alternatives on the shelves, both non-vegans and vegans have more choice. Particularly with Veganuary, where the messaging around the benefits of a vegan diet are more widely known, encouraging vegetarians, pescatarians and carnivores to make the switch for thirty one days," says Chris Griffon, founder of YaconViva!.

Considering health

Throughout lockdown, consumers became increasingly aware of the link between the food we eat and our health. Products boasting health benefits as well as meat and dairy-free credentials, such as gut health improvement and an opportunity to reduce sugar consumption, are welcomed by British shoppers. This, coupled with people's desire to experiment with new recipes while cooking from scratch, helped assist the growth of the plant-based sector in 2020.

"Increased awareness on the importance of looking after your health, and the natural world, are the key driving forces behind the growing vegan movement," Alan Bird, commercial director of Purition, tells us. "Enhanced interest will always influence others too, so the more popular veganism gets, the faster it will grow. There are also key calendar moments and events, such as Veganuary, where we do see a surge in sales of our vegan range."

"I think the global pandemic has contributed towards the interest in plant-based diets. In lockdown, people were either incredibly health-conscious or they were slipping into indulgent snacking habits. Those who have been eating more unhealthily may now try to reverse any weight gain as we start leaving our homes more and look to a vegan diet as a way to get back on track.

"Consumer trends are influencing the younger generation where there is a high concentration of vegans and flexitarians, particularly on social media with influencers and celebrities offering tips and recipes for plant-based foods. The conversations are louder, and I think many are inspired to try a vegan diet by these tastemakers. It's also not the case of 10 years ago where there were little-to-no options available. You can now go to a restaurant and have the choice of five or six dishes, rather than just one or two."

> "With more vegan alternatives on the shelves, both vegans and non-vegans have more choice. Particularly with Veganuary, where the messaging around the benefits of a vegan diet are more widely known"

Catering for all

Interestingly, many of the new plant-based launches the industry has witnessed weren't necessarily created with vegans in mind. After all, plant-based burgers that replicate the look, texture and taste of meat are a bit of a touchy subject for many vegans. And yet for those who are looking to simply reduce their meat intake, make healthy food swaps, or are just interested in a plant-based diet and food, it's an ideal combination: a product that replicates meat yet is potentially better for the environment, animal welfare and our health.

What's more, with increasingly creative recipes like BBQ pulled jackfruit and 'chuna' (chickpea tuna, that is), and a growing number of chefs and social media influencers developing plant-based recipes, the days of meat-free meals consisting





of potatoes and lettuce (or so some may think) are long gone.

Offering shoppers a number of options so they can choose what fits their tastes and lifestyle best is key to success. "We understand that food is a very personal journey." agrees Gem Misa, co-founder of Fullgreen. "As consumers we're constantly figuring out what we like to eat and what works for us – it's an ever changing experience and one that's very much based around dietary preferences, needs and experiences.

For us, it's about being transparent with our products with clear and concise information like macros and portions of veg so customers always have quick and easy access to nutritionals and can make informed decisions based on that."

Education is key

While the food and drink industry has seen a boom in product launches onto the UK, particularly in recent years, there is still a job to be done in terms of education and ensuring that shoppers are fully aware of the impact of their decision – whatever their chosen approach may be.

"As a brand we realise we have a responsibility to educate our customers on the power of a plant based diet," says Gem. "Our mission has, and always will be to encourage people to get more healthy fruit and veg onto their plates, and we maintain a helpful, supportive and inspiring tone throughout all of our marketing communications to ensure consumers get the information they need."

While the numbers don't lie – the UK is indeed experiencing a boom around plant-based food and drink, with record numbers of consumers adopting a vegan lifestyle, the meat industry could still welcome back some of the consumers who have moved towards plant-based diets through clear communication. A recent report from AHDB found that consumers are 'sleepwalking' away from eating meat, and are doing so not because of a conscious desire to eat less meat but because they feel uninspired by the meat, fish and poultry options available to them. The industry body's message behind the report was for retailers to entice 'unconscious reducers' back to eating more meat by expanding their range available.

"How unconscious reducers think and feel about meat isn't any different to those people who are actually increasing their meat consumption – they're not turning away on purpose so there is a chance to re-engage them with the category," Kim Malley, AHDB senior retail insight manager and one of the authors of the report, explained.

Retailers should maximise POS messaging to provide a balanced service. "The biggest opportunity is at point of purchase," says Kim. "The key thing the report highlights is those people are wanting a better in-store experience. There could be simple messaging in-store to remind people why they enjoy meat, give them a bit of inspiration and remind them it's versatile and convenient." She also advised that while the plant-based industry is excelling in terms of innovation, the meat industry is lagging behind when it comes to creating exciting new products to entice shoppers – as well as producing eye-catching packaging for its products.

By offering shoppers a considered selection which caters to all – whether they be plant-based, vegetarian, flexitarian or meat-eater – and ensuring that customers are educated around all of the options available to them, independent retailers can be confident that they are not only catering for a growing trend but providing a responsible service, too.



SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE · 2021 · STOCK CHECK



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LOVERAW CRE&M FILLED WAFER BAR

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THE BURY BLACK PUDDING COMPANY VEGETARIAN & VEGAN BLACK PUDDING

A versatile ingredient, this can be used as a meat-free burger, in pies, and in salads and pizzas.

buryblackpuddings.co.uk

"It isn't as simple as plant-based good/animal-based bad"



MINETTE BATTERS
NFU

What we eat is a personal choice. With differing advice and a huge variety of foods available, diets have become increasingly complex. Not only does what we eat have a huge impact on our health, but for many people food choices are a reflection of their values and beliefs.

Farmers aren't here to tell people what they should and shouldn't eat. But we do want to ensure that people are making informed decisions based on accurate information. It really isn't as simple as plant-based good/animal-based bad.

For example, people see the large scale, intensive farm systems in the US or the deforestation caused by cattle farming in Brazil, and are led to believe it's the same in the UK. It's not. Here, our cattle are predominantly grass-fed and graze fields that act as a significant carbon store. Our chickens are produced under some of the highest animal welfare regulations in the world, and our farmers put animal husbandry at the very top of the priority list.

Because of the systems we adopt in the UK, our greenhouse gas emissions from beef are half that of the world average and we lead the way in high welfare, climate-friendly farming. We can and want to do more which is why we have set an ambitious target for British agriculture to be net zero by 2040.

As a nation we need to build our understanding of where and how different foods are produced. Production systems can make a huge difference both for animal-based food and plant-based, and by understanding them better we can make informed decisions about what foods we want to eat.

I believe we all should have access to a nutritious and sustainable diet. By eating British meat and dairy, alongside plenty of fruit and veg, we can enjoy the foods we want while supporting good animal welfare, a thriving natural environment and minimising our climate impact.

> "Production systems can make a huge difference both for animal-based food and plant-based, and by understanding them better we can make informed decisions about what foods we want to eat"



TALKING SHOP

A new year has always been a time for taking stock of what's gone before and making new plans for what lies ahead, and 2021 offers a unique opportunity to do just that.

While being mindful of the impact that Covid-19 continues to have around the world, as well as within the UK's food and drink industry, the opportunities that this new year brings are easy to see.

I, for one, look forward to witnessing yet more innovation coming from both fine food retailers and producers. 2020 saw a great number of businesses triumph in adversity, and while there were certainly casualties which will be sorely missed, it was a time when imagination and creativity ran riot in an effort to save livelihoods and infrastructures. It was also a period within which entrepreneurs and business owners demonstrated their true mettle, and the fine food industry came together in an example of solidarity which inspired many across the UK and beyond.

It may well seem far away while we all work hard to keep ourselves afloat on these treacherous waters, but a calmer time is ahead. Vaccines will take effect and lockdowns will ease, bringing with them a wave of customers new and returning after a fearful year. Our work lies in maintaining the momentum we have built up during 2020. Keeping up our reputation for offering delicious and refreshing respite, an enjoyable retail experience which proudly sets itself apart from the commerce style led by falling giants such as Debenhams and Arcadia, and creating connections between customers, the food they eat and the environment it comes from.

Traditionally, plans for the next Christmas would start the moment the previous one had come to an end, but I hope that – now we know we can adapt and evolve last-minute when needed – we'll all be willing to take the time for a breather, a refreshing and replenishing break now that the annual 'silly season' has passed for another year.

I'm hopeful also that, now our creative juices have been awoken as a result of having to respond in new ways to the unprecedented challenges we've recently been faced with, we're willing and eager to be more imaginative than ever when it comes to running our businesses. Whether that be through collaboration, which has triumphed as a result of the outbreak of Covid, or thinking more creatively about in-house opportunities and challenges, let's not allow the progress we've made to fade as normality resumes.

Get in touch via holly.shackleton@aceville.co.uk.

5 MINUTES WITH...

AMY MORING, CO-FOUNDER OF HUNTER AND GATHER



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
Working with horses. I have a degree in equine and business management and love riding and training. I have a horse that I ride in my spare time and his name is Hippo.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
I was a waitress, catering for weddings and events, and it got me used to hard work, long hours and managing money.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Someone that tries. It doesn't matter if you "fail" as long as you gave it a go. That's inspiring to me.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
Being a bartender whilst at university was tough as it involved late nights, I smelt like beer constantly, I don't really drink, and am coeliac and barley intolerant (so do not drink beer at all).

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
It is not a job to me. This is just part of my life journey and I am really enjoying having the flexibility to express ideas and make decisions.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
The loneliness of starting a new brand can be difficult. I'm lucky to be co-founder with my fiancée Jeff so have someone to chat with/bounce ideas off.

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
The food industry is ripe with innovation at the moment, which is amazing to see. Consumers are seeking alternatives to the norm and this means start-ups have a greater chance to succeed.

TEA OR COFFEE?
Both! I have an MCT & Collagen Coffee every morning and then I switch to decaf tea in the afternoons.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
Cauliflower risotto with king prawns, truffle shavings and a drizzle of avocado oil.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
JFDI – Just f-ing do it.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
Something in Thailand – a cricket-type bug. I'm still unsure what it really was.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
The Horse Whisperer by Nicholas Evans.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Savoury, although I am partial to a square of 100% dark orange oil chocolate.

BE CONNECTED

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SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

Inside the next issue of Speciality Food:

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- Selling Cheese
- Temperature Controlled Packaging
- Frozen Food & Ready Meals
- Fairtrade and Sustainable



BRAND NEW LAUNCH!

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FULL OF INSPIRING PRODUCTS FOR SPRING/SUMMER

For a preview or for further information contact Jess on 01206 505901 or jessica.stevenson@aceville.co.uk

TRIED & TESTED



BULLION BUTTER
When I discovered Bullion Butter's range of flavoured butters, I had to sit up and take note. There are three varieties to choose from – each of which can easily become a dinnertime star.
bullionbutter.com

SEA SMOKED SALMON
Christmas and party season may have passed, but that's no reason to stop celebrating with quality smoked salmon – especially when it's as environmentally-conscious as the new launch from Sea Smoked, founders of the innovative salmon skin snacks, Sea Crisps. Smoked salmon is infamous for being unsustainably packed, but this new launch promises 100% recyclable, biodegradable and home-compostable packaging.
seasmoked.co.uk



SWAADISH MINT & CORIANDER CURRY
As much as I like scratch-cooking, I can't help but fall in love with a meal solution which promises both convenience and great, authentic flavour. Enter Swaadish – a new business set to shake up the ambient sauce category with its range of unique and flavour-packed jarred sauces. The brand's Mint & Coriander Curry brings a kick of freshness that you don't often see in ready-to-eat curry sauces.
swaadish.com



THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Alasdair Clifford, head chef of The Barrington Boar



My wife Victoria and I moved back to Somerset a few years ago where we set up shop in the heart of a rural village called Barrington. I was brought up on the north side of Somerset at the foot of Exmoor, Porlock where the moors meet the sea. It's a very different landscape in south Somerset; there's incredibly fertile soil around here so it's no wonder we have some of the most diverse arable farms in the country, offering everything from organic vegetables, orchards, vineyards and fantastic dairy. We are slap bang in the middle of what is essentially the Champagne region of cider country.

It really wasn't hard to find great, independent local suppliers and shops around us – most of the ingredients we use are sourced in Somerset, from the local farmers, foragers, butcher, brewers and cheesemongers living within a few miles of the restaurant. Even now, after two years at the Boar, we are still picking up new local suppliers to put on our menu – there's just such an abundance around here.

Bonners of Ilminster are an award-winning family butchers in neighbouring Ilminster, a five-minute drive away. Clinton and his team have been fantastic at providing us with local lamb and pork and were a real saviour during lockdown, being nearly the only place we could get decent quality local meat to use in our ready meal deliveries. For steaks, we head across to Buxton Butchers which is our favourite place for getting top quality salt-aged beef. They have a Himalayan salt aging chamber which produces beautifully tender beef. Their traditional family shop in the heart of Winterbourne village sells some really tasty pies and award-winning dry aged meats.

We're really lucky to be local to The Sausage Shed in Isle Brewers, where Ivan and his team make award-winning sausages from locally reared free-range pork. Like most of our producer friends in the area, they've been doing well with home delivery, and have been updating their meat boxes for customers in lockdown.

The Longman family have been farmers and cheesemakers in South Somerset for over two hundred years and have total control on their supply chain from the dairy herds in their fields to the delivery of cheese to customers around the south. They supply us with most of the dairy that we use in-house, from their farmhouse Cheddar to their incredible salted butter rolls.

Brown and Forrest Smokery is a small family-run smokery that's been going for 38 years, and based just a few miles away from the pub in a town called Langport. They produce the finest smoked eel, trout and salmon and do the most fantastic range of smoked pâtés, which Victoria and I are huge fans of. Jess from Brown & Forrest Smokery has been so supportive and encouraging of us from day one and is a regular drinker with us. We encourage our overnight guests to drop by their smokery to take something home.

I can't talk about independent shopping in Somerset without saying something about cider, and for us, without a doubt, it's all about Perry's Cider who have a great farm shop (and museum). George is a really forward thinking producer who uses traditional cider-making methods and purely Somerset apples (and a bit of pear) from either their own orchards or close by. Their OPA – Oak, Pear & Apple cider – is aged in oak barrels then sweetened with pear juice to create a tannin heavy cider with a lovely sweetness to it. What they do and the way they think is akin to producing wine on vineyards. We use their cider and apple juice a lot in our cooking as well.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH Garofalo

ITALIAN INSPIRATIONS

Classic Comforts



While 2020 saw a boom in consumer appetite for internationally-inspired and innovative food and drink – a distraction from the repetitive day-to-day rhythm of lockdown, perhaps – we also witnessed the return of comfort food, as shoppers sought respite from a stressful period by sinking a spoon into childhood favourites. With the impact of Covid-19 on the horizon for the foreseeable future, this hunger for the familiar may prove a boon independent retailers.

Consider 2021 the year of the nonna – a time to reflect on and celebrate family favourite recipes which have been passed down the generations, but which due to their lack of innovative bells and whistles may have slipped down the list in terms of promotion and position on-shelf.

You most likely already stock a number of Italian classics such as fine pasta, polenta, passata, and Tipo 00 flour – perfect for making pasta and pizza – so why not consider bringing them to the fore as this new year begins? Such tried and tested favourites are classics for a reason; as well as providing food lovers with a delicious taste of the familiar, they offer a blank canvas for home chefs to explore their culinary imaginations.

Once the home cook has moved from Strong White to Tipo 00 for their pizza dough, and mastered the perfect Margherita having sourced great quality tomatoes for the sauce and Mozzarella for the finishing touch, they have a solid base for experimentation. Trending nduja could soon be a staple in their arsenal, as could shining silver anchovies and artisanal olives.

Equally, a simple bowl of steaming, creamy polenta – packed with finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano – and topped with locally sourced and slow-cooked beef could lead to experimentation with polenta chips, moreishly textured citrus cakes and polenta pie crusts.

The key is in providing customers with a stable foundation on which to explore the world of fine food, just like the iconic Italian nonna would do. As independent fine food retailers, run by proud lovers of food themselves, *Speciality Food* retailers are perfectly positioned to offer this jumping off point for beginner and established foodies alike.

Are you passionate about Italian food and drink? If so we would love to hear from you – get in touch via holly.shackleton@aceville.co.uk.



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NEW



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