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SPECIALITY FOOD

CONNECTING THE FINE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY



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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the first issue of 2023! After the festive rush of Christmas, no doubt you're eager for a well-deserved cuppa (or something stronger) and a rest before diving into the exciting opportunities this year brings – and the *Speciality Food* team is ready to assist and inspire.

First of all, we're delighted to introduce you to the very best food and drink that Northern Ireland and Scotland have to offer; from passionate producers to the ambassadors proudly sharing their stories, there's plenty of newness to discover.

Speaking of newness, you'll find a kaleidoscope of brand new product launches, trends and viewpoints within these pages – as well as industry expertise to help you make the most of the opportunities. From chocolate and low/no to free-from and delicious breakfast options, we've got you covered.

We are also proud to present expert voices on regenerative farming: an opportunity we should all get on board with in 2023.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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The high street is evolving: how indies can cash in

A new report has revealed that the British high street is changing rather than dying, and fine food retail is well-placed to benefit

According to new research from Ordnance Survey, high streets and shopping areas appear to be evolving into more service and hospitality-based venues.

Despite the restrictions of lockdowns and social distancing rules, eating and drinking establishments saw growth of almost 4% between 2020 and 2022.

In fact, 2,000 more cafés and tea rooms were operating after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Good news for indies

This change demonstrates that consumers want something more than supermarket and large chain drudgery – they are looking for excellent customer service and a unique experience that only independents can offer.

As Andrew Goodacre, CEO of the British Independent Retail Association (BIRA), explained, "This report is interesting and conforms trends we have noticed over the past few years. There has been a growth in 'service retailing' and a decline in the traditional 'comparison goods retailer' – and the pandemic seems to have emphasised this change.

"As well as the trend towards service retailing, we have also seen an increase in fine food outlets such a local delis, butchers, local bakeries, etc. This is building on consumer desire for provenance and diversity, as well as the experience of coffee and cake in these shops. These are positive trends for the high street and those in the fine food sector need to think about the next steps.

"A good high street is a series of inter-dependent businesses working together to create a great place to visit, and independent retail is absolutely integral to that future vision."

Within this, fine food retail such as delis and cafés, can provide the solution to this changing landscape.

According to Mark Kacary, managing director at Norfolk Deli, "In many ways, I see this as a good thing, provided that retailers understand the changes and how they need to interact with customers to accommodate this desire for more socialising."

How to cash in

While this change offers independents a key opportunity to cash in, according to Andrew, independents need to consider several things.

"Can they incorporate a café into the business? Can they build in cooking or bread-making lessons to further engage with the general public? All retailers have to think about offering 'things to do' as well as selling things to buy, and fine food businesses are well placed to succeed in this respect", he explained.

Mark agreed, "Speciality food establishments have an ideal opportunity to cash in on this trend. There are people who want to be entertained, who want to be fed, who want some form of engagement and service, so the thing is to think what can I do to engage with customers?

"We opened our café three doors away from the deli and we have seen a growth in the number of people who eat with us due to the newer premises. It has also allowed us to offer a range of events and services for our customers. We have held an Indian evening, a couple of cheese and wine taster evenings and we are currently planning a Burns Night cheese tasting and a cheese quiz night.

The future of the high street

With urban shopping areas becoming more service-focused, there is a huge opportunity for indies to suceed while chains lose out.

As Andrew explained, "The closure of large chains, and now banks, is well documented. We have seen many traditional indie retailers change their offerings, for example by the inclusion of cafes in their shops.

"We expect these changes to continue but we must remember that every vibrant high street needs diversity and should not be dominated by any particular sector."

In order to thrive, this means that indies still need to be unique in their offering. Mark told *Speciality Food*, "I think what this trend will do is make retailers think about what is happening beyond their front door.

"The changes can be viewed in two ways a) it is a lot harder to trade in the traditional sense. Or b) these are exciting times and the rule book to retail is being thrown in the trash can and allowing businesses to be innovative and creative.

"I think creativity and the enthusiasm to try something new and not to be afraid if the first idea doesn't work will be key to the future success of speciality retail. It should also help to really differentiate the small retailer from the sterile corporate supermarkets."

However, according to Martin McTague, national chair of the Federation of Small Businesses, there is reason to be cautious.

"The hospitality sector took a gigantic hit during the Covid-19 lockdowns, so these figures will provide a crumb of comfort to the UK's struggling high streets. But 62% of firms in the hospitality and tourism sectors are still concerned about the decline of their local high streets and 54% think that making empty units available for businesses could help save it.

"That's why the Government should create Hospitality Enterprise Zones to incentivise small businesses to take over empty spaces. On top of this, 42% of firms in the hospitality sector say they will need to close, downsize or restructure if the Energy Bill Relief Scheme comes to an end next March.

"The government must come up with plans to avoid a cliff edge and provide ongoing support", he concluded.



"Foinavon Times"



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES

Foinavon was a racehorse who famously won the Grand National in 1967 at odds of 100 to one.

His achievement is obscure to lots of people nowadays as it happened 55 years ago, but perhaps it could serve as a metaphor for speciality food shops as we face the challenges of 2023.

Basically, Foinavon was not an outstanding performer but he was a solid one. He was placed in some races and changed owners a few times.

When he was entered into the Grand National in 1967, there were not high hopes for his chances and he was turned down by three jockeys until shortly before the race a jockey finally agreed.

Neither the trainer nor the owner turned up to watch as Foinavon lined up to start the race with 43 other starters and some prominent names of the time in the field.

As they approached the 23rd fence on the second circuit, Foinavon was 22nd. At the fence, due to an unexpected event involving a riderless horse, many horses collided, refused, fell or unseated their riders.

Foinavon following behind all this slowed down, found a gap and cleared the fence to gain a 30-length advantage with only six fences left and went on to win. As we speciality food retailers line up for the start of 2023, many of us will be hoping to survive the course with the daunting obstacles of the cost-of-living crisis, energy price hikes, staff shortages, supply issues and national strikes. But as smaller businesses we have the flexibility and ability to slow down, adjust course and manouevre our way through crises. Every new danger presents a different challenge of course, and it is important to be aware some can be fatal, but having got through Covid, Brexit and assorted unprecedented occurrences at least for the present time, there WILL be a way through the avalanche of worries that await us in 2023.

All the major food retailers are facing the same issues but not all have the ability to multitask or evolve so quickly. By this I mean to change course abruptly and throw precedent out of the window. From finding new food and wine suppliers overnight, to listing new products instantly, to updating prices, to asking staff to carry out different roles from one hour to the next, to changing utility suppliers or even adjust opening and closing times when necessary without getting clearance from head office.

Nor do the larger players have the same ability to reach out to customers because the relationship between staff and customers in speciality food shops is on a more personal level. In short. we can reach parts of our local communities that other bigger food retailers cannot reach. And lastly, we can respond to customer feedback instantly and act on suggestions from staff to put things right when necessary.

Here's hoping we will all be able to produce some Foinavon moments for our small businesses to get through the year.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STATS

92%

92% of SMEs say that rising costs are impacting their profitability – and 32% say it is a big problem, a new survey by Moore UK has revealed. By far the biggest problem for SMEs is the increasing cost of energy, with 55% of them saying it is the issue they are most concerned about. This ranks a long way ahead of the cost of petrol and diesel (34%) in second place. Maureen Penfold, chair of Moore UK, explained, "With inflation still rising, SMEs are under a huge amount of pressure. The cost of energy is a major pain point for virtually every business. For some, it is going to test their ability to survive."

56%

Research from Meatless Farm has revealed that over half (56%) of Brits have ditched environmentally friendly products due to the cost-of-living crisis, admitting price is now significantly more important than health, sustainability and quality when it comes to the weekly food shop. In fact, two-fifths (41%) plan to buy more frozen and non-organic (40%) meat whilst almost a third a third of shoppers (28%) are switching to cheaper processed meat. Two in five (39%) also say organic and fairtrade foods are now bottom of their shopping lists despite previously being 'must have' items.

3 mil

According to new research by the WWF, almost three million tonnes of edible food go to waste on UK farms each year. This has been described as a 'hidden crisis' for the country. The report says produce worth £1.8bn is lost each year, which is the equivalent to 6.9bn meals annually, or more than 18m meals a day. This research comes at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is forcing many to choose between food or heating.

23.2%

Q3 of 2022 saw strong export growth, with exports 23.2% higher than in Q3 2021, as exports to both EU and non-EU markets increased substantially. This can be attributed to soaring demand for UK food and drink in certain EU countries such as Italy (42%), Spain (52%) and the Netherlands (35%) and rapid growth across the globe, including in the UAE, Singapore and India, driven by increasing demand for quality British products such as gin and cheese.

NEWS IN BRIEF

JUNK FOOD AD BAN DELAYED UNTIL 2025

A ban on adverts for foods high in fat, salt and sugar before 9pm was due to come into force from January 2023, as well as a ban on 'buy one get one free' deals on junk food. However, in May, it was delayed for a year by the then prime minister Boris Johnson. The policy's implementation has now been delayed further until after the next scheduled general election, with action unlikely to be put into place before 2025.

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY RULES OUT HELP FOR FARMERS AND CONSUMERS

The government has ruled out making any intervention in the market to help farmers or consumers with high food prices, according to the environment secretary, Thérèse Coffey. After food charity Sustain found farmers made less than a tenth of a penny in profit from a supermarket loaf selling to consumers for £1.14, speaking to MPs, she commented, "I don't think we are at the stage of a market intervention directly when it comes to pricing."

WALES TO ENACT SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAN FROM AUTUMN 2023

Wales is set to become the first part of the UK to bring in a ban on a list of single-use plastics as part of efforts to reduce pollution. The ban covers items such as cutlery, stirrers, drinking straws, plastic-stemmed cotton buds, polystyrene fast-food containers and cups, and thin single-use plastic carrier bags.







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TASTE DIRECT ★ 2023 ★

British food industry could be 'sleepwalking' into a national crisis

According to the National Farmers Union, the UK could be about to face serious supply chain issues – how can the government tackle it?

The National Farmers Union (NFU) has warned that yields of tomatoes and other popular crops will likely slump to record lows this year, it said, with potential supply problems ahead as already seen with eggs.

This is due to soaring fuel, fertiliser and feed costs that are putting farmers under severe pressure, with fertiliser prices for farmers more than tripling since 2019 and the cost of feed and diesel up by 75%. Coupled with a loss of seasonal workers to harvest and sow earlier this year, the farming industry is facing a perfect storm.

SUPPLY CHAIN CRISIS

The consequence of these issues could be serious supply chain issues if action is not taken to help the farming industry cope with demand.

Minette Batters, president of the NFU, said in a statement, "Shoppers up and down the country have for decades had a guaranteed supply of high-quality affordable food produced to some of the highest animal welfare, environmental and food safety standards in the world. That food, produced with care by British farmers, is critical to our nation's security and success. But British food is under threat.

"Only last week, the former Director General of MI5, The Baroness Manningham-Buller, said that food is part of our critical national infrastructure and that government needs to be consistent in planning for our food supply. I couldn't agree more, particularly at a time when global volatility is threatening the stability of the world's food production, food security and energy security.

"We have already seen the egg supply chain crippled under the pressure caused by these issues and I fear the country is sleepwalking into further food supply crises, with the future of British fruit and vegetable supplies in trouble. We need government and the wider supply chain to act now - tomorrow could well be too late."

TACKLING THE EMERGENCY SITUATION

Of course, this will have a detrimental impact on struggling retailers, especially indies.

As Tina McKenzie, policy chair at the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), explained, "Healthy supply chains are the cogs that keep the economy alive because they boost the productivity, resilience and financial strength of small and large businesses alike.

"Although small businesses are agile, they are also very vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. Our figures show that almost 90 per cent of all small businesses based in rural areas have reported an increase in the cost of running their business, which is feeding through to increased inflation in food and other areas."

Consumers to spend more intentionally in the coming year

Industry experts are predicting a big squeeze in the coming months, as soaring energy prices and food bills cause shoppers to think twice about purchases.

According to Simon Moriarty, director of Mintel Trends, "Consumers are refocusing on what value means to them and spending more intentionally as a result. In a tough economic environment, consumers want to make smart financial choices without sacrificing their quality of life.

"Expect a stronger focus on durability, flexibility and timelessness as consumers seek to buy less and own products that last longer and serve multiple purposes. As the market becomes further saturated with added-value claims, consumers will grow more sceptical and discerning."

Jayne Andrews, marketing director of Fentiman's, agreed, "It's clear that consumers are changing their priorities in preparation for a tight few years, however, it's encouraging that whilst there will be cutbacks, there will still be a desire to enjoy high-quality experiences.

"As we enter times of uncertainty and financial concern, it's critical that we understand what this means for the industry."

This is where fine food retailers can excel, offering provenance, quality and the ability to support shoppers' local communities during difficult times. As Simon added, "With so much global uncertainty there will be a greater movement to protect local resources and boost local business.

"This is a hangover from the pandemic, but also a reflection of consumers' changing attitudes towards what's important to them – a reconnection with 'local' is also a way for consumers to protect themselves financially, environmentally and psychologically, and feel that they are giving back in some way."

> "With global uncertainty, there will be a greater movement to boost local business"

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STEFANO CUOMO
MACKNADE

I was trying to crowbar in lyrics from a favourite Guns & Roses track whilst writing this in November, looking forward to the New Year and January... but the rain feels as if it will last forever and, tragically for this season, it is not cold!

Crazy, mild world, in which we seem to be hitting a second spring... what will January bring?!

The Christmas season weaves its own indeterminable route, winding itself towards what does look like a promising outcome – why does it need to be so torturous, we are just here transacting, offering what is wonderful, beautifully made, giving folk what they want. It should be simpler, but we have all made this world so much harder, for all of us... and so the fear and jeopardy will always be there. I know no other way, yet I need to find one!

With that infinite goal of harmony – harmony between nature and humanity (something I cannot solve but I hope that, when I pass, I will have been part of dragging us a tiny step closer to) – the New Year is a cracking time to assess as to where I am on the trajectory towards it.

2022 has been a year like no other – Covid set a structure that highlighted the very best of Macknade, our team constantly looking out for the whole community, whether peers, suppliers or, of course, customers – but I have to hold up my hands and say I had not anticipated the insidious impacts of 2022: the coupled danger of explicit inflation and the hangover of Covid.

The economy looked set to blast out of 2021 and the lockdowns that had held us back, and so plans had been set to build on this. As we know, the reality was more complex!

The macabre joy of 2023 is that we have a clearer vision, albeit one that will severely chafe if not navigated effectively.

It will require that sense of harmony, firstly in our communities themselves, as we work through how we make our society as equitable as possible, growing thriving (thriving versus simply growing is an important conversation for another day!) businesses that support this, and, most importantly, the challenge of balancing the wonder of what we have created in our human society with the impact it has on our natural world.

The Christmas run-up has been a busy operational period, but equally it is the perfect planning time too, as we are able to focus on budgets and plans for the year ahead, and never has it been more important or indeed more exciting.

The challenge now set is not one of monetary 'one-upmanship', simply chasing growth targets.

Rather, it is being part of creating models that support the world around us, whilst delivering commercial value, all in a constrained economic landscape... what a challenge to aim for.

At Macknade we continually discuss the significance of our role within the community, whilst recognising we must express the importance of the business as a commercial entity, and that there does not need to be a diametric tension there.

This is not rapacious capitalism, rather true commercial integrity, and the challenge for comms has always been how to capture this in a 'pithy catch-all'.

Community Commerce – a phrase we hope represents our aim to be here to support all those we interact with, yet does not shy away from the need to deliver profit, a profit that is there to support the business, and in turn the community that we speak so much about.

SMEs continue to be a critical conduit for real value exchange in our communities, and in 2023 getting this balance right will be crucial.

Our mantra for 2023 and the years ahead – Community Commerce – we will do everything to support our people through protecting our business; we will not shy away from the reality of needing to make profit to move forward... it will be the impact of what we do with it which will be how we are measured.

> "Our mantra for 2023 and the years ahead – Community Commerce – we will do everything to support our people through protecting our business; we will not shy away from the reality of needing to make profit to move forward... it will be the impact of what we do with it which will be how we are measured"

How fine food producers and retailers are helping their local food banks this winter

As more and more families struggle to afford groceries in the face of rising inflation and the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades, we spoke to those offering help

With unprecedented demand for food bank parcels putting a strain on local communities, fine food brands and retailers have been partnering with charities such as FareShare along with their local food banks to distribute food and drink to those who need it most.

As fine food retailers are naturally embedded in their local communities, there are lots of ways for them to get involved with food banks and similar charities.

According to Simon Jones, co-owner of Forest Deli, "I feel all food shops can help their local food banks, and I am sure many do. One of our customers said a couple of years ago, it's not just giving the absolute basics, sometimes a nice packet of biscuits is a lovely thing to donate as it would cheer a person or family up.

"We ask for donations for some of our tasting events, but there is never any pressure to donate as we all appreciate that times are hard for most, and there are other local charities very much in need as well. It is tragic that food banks are needed in this country, but the work the food banks do is truly life-saving and amazing and we are pleased to be able to help in any way we can."

But as Lucy Antal, senior project manager at Feedback Global, explained, indies should start by asking what their local drive needs.

"Just dumping random surplus food isn't helpful. Any bulk discounts or wholesale savings you can pass on or support community food pantries will be welcomed. If you have short-date fresh food to donate, connect with the local communities who are offering meals."



Explore the best the South West has to offer at The Source

The Source trade show will take place 8th-9th February 2023, at Westpoint, near Exeter, and is open to anyone who runs a pub, hotel, restaurant, café, deli, farm shop or catering business, or if your business is food and drink.

This is one of the key times of year for buyers to seek out new suppliers of products and services and, in partnership with regional food group Taste of the West, The Source will showcase the latest flavours and ideas. It is the biggest regional trade show in the country and will feature everything from high-quality ingredients and the freshest food and drinks through to foodservice, kitchen equipment and designs, stylish furniture and the latest business systems to keep your operation running smoothly.

Over two days, visitors can see what's trending in cuisine, network with colleagues, and pick up on the trends, business challenges and opportunities shaping the sector for 2023.

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The Life & Soul of the Pantry



FINE VEGAN CHEESE – UPDATE

Four years after Trend Watch visited the UK's first non-dairy cheesemonger, Sally-Jayne Wright takes stock

20 Waitrose stores broke new ground in December 2022 – they offered a £25 hamper of mixed, artisan, vegan cheeses. It followed the supermarket's introduction in May of four lines with dairy-like names – Truffle Camemvert, Brixton Blue, Shoreditch Smoked and Balham Blue. I hear they're being supplied by La Fauxmagerie. Those people who caused such a stink when they opened in London's Brixton in February 2019. Yes, they dared to use the word cheese for a dairy-free product. Defending the interests of milk processors, Dairy UK accused them of misleading the public.

BY FINE VEGAN CHEESE, DO YOU MEAN THAT PROCESSED SLIME MADE FROM COCONUT OIL?

No. We're talking about a product good-looking enough to accompany crackers and quince paste on a cheeseboard. Cashews or almonds are fermented and aged with white miso or nutritional yeast for savouriness. Producers use the same bacterial cultures as for dairy cheese – penicillium roqueforti in the Balham Blue.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE FINE VEGAN CHEESE TREND?

- New vegans miss dairy cheese more than any other animal food
- They are disappointed by many 'first wave' vegan cheeses
- There is strong demand for plant-based cheese, motivating continual innovation by producers

ISN'T THE EXPRESSION 'FINE VEGAN CHEESE' A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?

Patricia Michelson, founder of dairy cheese purveyor, La Fromagerie, thinks so. "The core of our brand identity is about taste and tradition. We don't feel any vegan cheese yet on the market has the potential to convey terroir – that sense of place. Neither do we accept the premise upon which vegan cheeses are founded – that all dairy is a monolith and all automatically bad for the environment and animal welfare. Our traditional cheeses have historical and cultural value and represent farming practices with exemplary environmental, animal husbandry and biodiversity credentials."

THERE WERE SEVEN DIFFERENT CHEESE-AND-WINE PLATES WHEN YOU ATE AT LA FAUXMAGERIE'S THE CHEESE CELLAR IN EAST LONDON. HOW DID THEY TASTE?

Our favourite was The Blue plate – a Brixton Blue and Balham Blue accompanied by pickled pears, caper-berries, walnut bread and Malbec. We were intrigued by a baked truffle Camembert-like cheese roasted with fresh rosemary, accompanied by vegan honea and with Levain baguette chunks for dunking. It was oilier and less creamy than baked dairy Camembert but enjoyable, particularly with Champagne.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR NON-DAIRY CHEESE?

Cost because nuts are expensive. There are few UK producers and they haven't yet developed a good Cheddar or Halloumi. AltCheese Ltd. of Shepton Mallet – exhibitors at September's Speciality & Fine Food Fair – are trying hard; we like the texture of their AltFarms Cheddar even if the ingredients – oat, coconut oil, potato starch and fava beans are disconcerting. Many products are too soft. This was one of the reasons Aldi rejected a televised supplier pitch from vegan cheese producer, I am Nut OK (Channel 4, *Aldi's Next Big Thing*).

TASTE IS STILL AN ISSUE, ISN'T IT?

One supermarket buyer told us would-be vegans are often advised to give up all cheese for six months before going plant-based; the implication being they won't then remember how wonderful good cheese tastes.

WHOSE BRANDS DO YOU RECOMMEND?

Established in 2018, and named after Crystal Palace, Palace Culture has won a slew of Great Taste Awards for such cheezes as The Mouldy Goaty, Herbes de Provence, Kimcheeze and Almond Ricotta. Founder Mirko Parmigiani is of Italian descent; he was motivated to create new cheezes that his dairy-intolerant son could enjoy.

HOW CAN WE MAKE THE MOST OF THE TREND?

- You'll do better in vegan hotspots such as Brighton, East Sussex and Manchester. The stores chosen for Waitrose's trial include Guildford, Weybridge and Leigh on Sea
- Use a specialist wholesaler like Kent-based Curd & Cure
- Don't expect plant-based cheeses to smell, taste or behave like their dairy equivalents. They don't need to breathe so keep them wrapped and refrigerated. Don't leave soft, nut-based vegan cheeses out for long periods or they will dry out and discolour

> "Upmarket, dairy-free, sharing platters present an excellent opportunity if your customers are young, urban, vegan and reducetarian"

WILL THE TREND LAST?

Much depends on whether producers can come up with the goods. Naturalness is still a concern.

Yet whoever would have predicted that by 2023, more than one in three British people would drink plant-based milk (Mintel). According to Mintel, 26% of dairy cheese eaters and buyers are reducing their intake for environmental concerns. These reducetarians could well swap if vegan cheese improved.

Meanwhile, upmarket, dairy-free, sharing platters present an excellent opportunity if your customers are young, urban, vegan and reducetarian. Style your plates, shout about it on your socials and the hipsters will seek you out.

It will be interesting to see what happens at Waitrose.

PLANT-BASED CHEESE FACES **CHALLENGES** TO **UNLOCK** ITS **POTENTIAL**: NOTABLY, **PRICE**, EATING **EXPERIENCE** AND **NATURALNESS**

(*UK CHEESE MARKET REPORT 2022*, MINTEL)



The Life & Soul of the Pantry

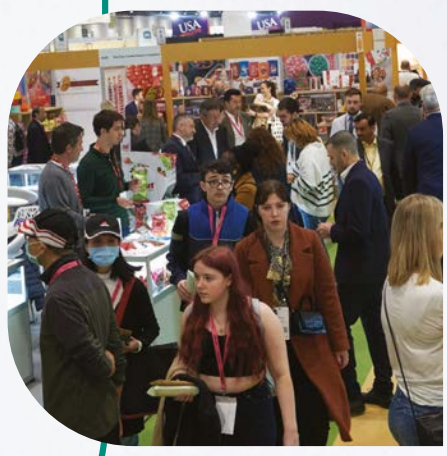
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There will be the opportunity to meet the buyers, learn about social food security, understand the Cluster, exhibit your products, hear from inspirational speakers and enjoy food and drink from local manufacturers.

Workshops:

- Alex Larter, UEA - Shaping the Cluster and its' membership
- TBC - How to innovate and develop food and drink products
- Gemma Crane, Mindset HR - How to get your first employee and creating positive culture
- TBC - How to make your products healthier

For more information or to answer any questions get in touch with our Marketing and Events Coordinator, Charlotte Beach, c.beach@uea.ac.uk

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MEET THE PRODUCER

Through a combination of environmentally-friendly practices, a forward-thinking outlook and an exciting product range, The Garlic Farm has become an icon of the fine food industry. Director Barnes Edwards tells its story

Behind The Garlic Farm is "a story of specialism," begins Barnes Edwards, director. Fascinated by the "heart of all flavour", the garlic bulb, the business has been celebrating the often-overlooked produce for three generations and now has an impressive operation to show for its expertise – a farm shop, restaurant and holiday accommodation on the farm, as well as frequent visitors throughout the year. This dedicated focus has been key to the business's success: "This specialism gives us distinctiveness, and our model of entertaining customers at our farm consolidates goodwill and differentiation."

A must-stock range

It's not for nothing that garlic is unfailingly found in home cooks' kitchens across the world – "it is in so many dishes across so many countries and cultures, and has such a transformational effect on food." While domestic cooks will all too happily crush a garlic clove or two into a sauce, most gladly rely on the expertise of The Garlic Farm's in-house product developers to create deliciously convenient and innovative new ways to incorporate the flavour into their dishes.

"Fresh and hot-smoked garlic are at the core of our range, with carefully curated collections of mayonnaise, table sauces, pickles, chutneys and condiments," begins Barnes. "Our wholesale range is broader and deeper than a typical producer brand because we have our own farm shop to fill. This tends to work for our customers as retailers appreciate the variety of categories we can reliably cover for them."

Doing things right

While independent retailers can certainly take their own steps to be more environmentally-friendly, they are reliant on their suppliers when it comes to considerately-produced



stock. Thankfully, The Garlic Farm is taking great strides in satisfying the increasing demand for benefiting people and planet.

"We have recently completed full organic certification with The Soil Association for all our farmland and beef cattle," explains Barnes, "and we have been independently inspected to confirm we are, in the words of their standards: "delivering the highest levels of animal welfare, protecting human and animal health, safeguarding the environment and protecting the interests of organic consumers."

While organically farmed land represents only 2.9% of UK land, sales of organic products are over £3 billion following 10 years of consecutive growth in the sector. Independent retail played a valuable role, with sales to indies growing by 9% in 2021. "Organic farming is a holistic system governed by legal standards that works with nature in a circular way rather than relying on synthetic inputs. Whilst all our farmland is now 100% organic certified, it will take us some time to convert our product range," says Barnes.

The Garlic Farm's efforts go far beyond a box-ticking exercise. "The rigorous and methodical steps we have taken to join others who are farming in a certified organic system is very tangible evidence of our goal to use our land and business for the benefit of people and planet." This approach has benefits for all. "Organic farming is well known to deliver ecological benefit. What is less publicised about organic certification is both the requirement for the highest possible welfare standards for animals as well as the human impact. Yes, the health benefits of organic food are well evidenced but for those actually working the land, an organic system can be radically less harmful because of the absence of inputs."

The business has also applied for B Corp status – formalising its commitment to use business as a force for good. "We have been working on this for almost four years, and it has taken us longer than many because of our diversified nature – we are farmers, wholesalers, retailers, restauranteurs, hospitality providers and community volunteers!" The B Corp impact assessment led The Garlic Farm to commit to the Living Wage Foundation – "something that is unusual for a farming business."

An organic future

The next 12 months and beyond are looking bright for The Garlic Farm and its fellow organic pioneers. "The growth in sales of organic product will hopefully stimulate more UK land to be converted," says Barnes. "Germany saw a 25% increase in their organic market last year, driven by consumer concern for animal welfare and environment. Their coalition government has set a target for 30% of German farmland to be organic by 2030."







An increase in organic farming may not be a simple fix-all solution, but it's certainly a powerful force to invest in. "Organic does not solve all the problems of our food and farming system but when embraced alongside other regenerative and responsible practices it could deliver transformational benefit to people and planet. In my view we need swift, bold action to embrace these techniques and standards at scale."

And for The Garlic Farm? "Stay tuned for some exciting additions to the core range and our first crop of organic-certified garlic in the summer!" says Barnes. "We are also hoping to help spread the wings of Wild Island – the award-winning producer of dressings and fruit vinegars. We purchased the business last year, the products have been made on our farm for over a decade and are completely stunning."

By feeding the consumer appetite for delicious, expertly-created products borne from a forward-thinking ethos, The Garlic Farm is destined to be a smart partner for *Speciality Food* readers for years to come.



A TASTE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

With its renowned produce, passionate makers and community focus, Northern Ireland is a fine food powerhouse

While mainland Britain is full of producers creating excellent food and drink, enterprising independent food retailers across the UK should look across the channel to explore some truly unique products and stories.

Indie retailers across the UK are famed for their cheese expertise, so *Speciality Food* readers are bound to be excited by recent developments in Northern Ireland's cheese sector where many cheesemakers have worked closely with the Academy of Cheese to develop their expertise. The World Cheese Awards recently awarded Dart Mountain Cheese's Meeny Hill with a gold award and Kilcreen with silver, while Velocheese's Stracciatella – the delicious result of a partnership between Indie Fude and Davide Tani – was awarded bronze.

The country has long been revered for its whiskey, and this favoured sector is seeing impressive growth as well as renown. The number of distillers is booming, with exciting new Northern Irish whiskeys being launched by makers including Shortcross, McConnell's, Hinch and Echlinville – but it's not only whiskey that is proving to be a popular export. "Northern Ireland is now home to over 20 distilleries and breweries producing single malt, pot still and blended Irish whiskeys, gin, poitin, vodka, rum, craft beer, cider and hard seltzers. From Old Bushmills Distillery, the world's oldest licensed distillery, to innovative newcomers including Hinch, Echlinville, McConnells, Rademon, Killowen, Copeland and Boatyard," says Michelle Charrington, business development director at Invest NI. Indeed, Echvlinville Distillery's whiskey, The Spirit of Belfast, picked up the coveted Whiskey of the Year title at the Irish Whiskey Awards with its single cask bottling of 21 year old Palo Cortado sherry cask finish whiskey being named Ireland's best whiskey.

Read on for six need-to-know producers showcasing the very best of Northern Ireland's fine food and drink.



PRODUCER SPOTLIGHTS

CRAWFORD'S ROCK SEAWEED COMPANY

"Crawford's Rock is named after a large craggy landmark that sits off Derryogue Bay at low tide," begins founder Michelle Wilson. "We hand-harvest a profile of seaweeds like kelp, serrated wrack, dulse, sugar kelp, bladderwrack, sea spagetti and more in a sustainable way and find ourselves as keepers of the shoreline storing information about trends of the seaweed." Sustainability is key to the business's philosophy. "We adopt a reuse, recycle, reduce waste policy and recognise that seaweed grows in many climatic conditions; our hand harvested cultivation has minimal pressure on the environment and we even see the seaweed thrive as we harvest sustainably." Consumer longevity is also a consideration. "We invite communities and groups to join us for A Day at the Beach, where we forage for seaweeds and cook with locally caught fish, cod, hake and crab, then relax and enjoy a cold water swim. Afterwards as the sun goes down reflect on positive mental health and wellbeing."



MCCONNELLS IRISH WHISKY

"McConnell's Irish Whisky is a brand that dates back to 1776, and thanks to its re-launch by Belfast Distillery Company it is once again finding great success across the city of Belfast and across Northern Ireland," begins John Kelly, CEO. "McConnell's was born in Belfast, one of the world's great industrial cities, and will be synonymous with the city for many decades to come. Indeed, whiskey was once one of Belfast's premier industries – back in the 1800s it produced more whiskey than any other city on the island of Ireland. The team at Belfast Distillery Company is intent on restoring this great tradition through the re-launch of McConnell's and the construction of McConnell's Distillery and Visitor Experience in the heart of Belfast. McConnell's 5-Year-Old Irish Whisky and McConnell's Sherry Cask Finish are winning international awards and building the profile of our portfolio in global spirits markets."



CORNDALE FARM

Award-winning Corndale Farm is playing a vital role in the growth of Northern Ireland's charcuterie sector, yet its success belies the fact that it is a relatively new enterprise. Alistair Crown, founder, began farming in 2012 with a modest herd of just four saddleback pigs. After slowly growing the farm, investing in breeding stock and infrastructure, in 2015 he spotted a gap in the market for Irish-made charcuterie and launched the first product in the Corndale Farm range: Chorizo Picante. Since then we have grown both the farm and the charcuterie business," says Alistair. "We now farm over 200 pigs at any time and have a range of 10 different charcuterie products. We have won a string of awards including a three-star Great Taste Award and Gold at Blas na hEireann. Today, the range includes a selection of chorizos and salamis, as well as trending 'nduja.



A MUST-VISIT REGION

Gary Quate, tourism manager – food and drink at Tourism NI, explains what makes Northern Ireland the ultimate foodie destination



For such a small size, Northern Ireland is punching well above its weight in terms of food quality and experience. There is a real energy simmering in Northern Ireland, and we are now firmly on the culinary map for visitors who want to experience high quality produce, crafted by passionate and talent people. From Michelin-rated chefs to award-winning brewers, distillers, cider and chocolate makers, Northern Ireland is a must-visit destination for lovers of food and drink.

The giant spirited people of Northern Ireland and our legendary hospitality uniquely sets us apart from other destinations. Whether you visit a Belfast pub or a farm in County Fermanagh, we have a strong food identity and a wealth of local specialities to try. Armagh is also known as the Orchard County, so it's not surprising to arrive here and experience some of the finest ciders, made with the Armagh Bramley Apple which has PGI accreditation. Another two local products share the same unique accreditation: the Comber Earlie Potato, best served skin on, with a knob of Abernethy hand rolled butter and a little bit of salt and pepper to season; and Lough Neagh Eels, delicious pan friend, serving up an exceptional smoked taste!

Of course, the best way to find out about a destination is to meet the makers, take a food tour or get hands on with a food and drink experience. Right across all parts of Northern Ireland, we have some incredible opportunities to learn about our food and drink including the opportunity to visit Northern Ireland's smallest Distillery at Killowen, to learn how they produce their award winning poitin, or to make traditional griddle breads including soda, potato and wheaten bread at Tracey's Farmhouse Kitchen on the shores of Strangford Lough or to taste bean to bar chocolate, handcrafted by husband and wife, Shane and Dorothy at Neary Nogs in County Down.

Collaboration is at the heart of food and drink in Northern Ireland. In recent years, we have seen tremendous growth in chefs, food and drink networks and experience providers, who collaborate to deliver world-class festivals, events and experiences for visitors to enjoy at all times of the year.

NI FOOD & DRINK: A THRIVING INDUSTRY

Michelle Charrington, business development director at Invest NI, looks back on a successful showcase



It was great to return to a live event after a series of successful online supplier showcase features over the last three years – note value of visitor networking as well as conversations with suppliers. We welcomed around 50 trade buyers and journalists from GB, ROI and further afield and would like to thank all visitors for their interest and support. Some business was done on the day and many follow-up conversations are ongoing.

80 suppliers featured at the showcase, including many award-winning products. NI companies won 159 awards in this year's Great Taste Awards, including five impressive three-star awards (Corndale Farm Charcuterie, Ballylisk Cheese and Morelli's sorbet). NI producers have also seen much success in Quality Food Awards, Scottish Retail Food & Drink Awards and Blas nah Eireann Awards. Invest NI is committed to working with local Northern Ireland food and drink businesses to help them develop new business in GB and further afield. Activities include supplier development programmes, trade shows, meet-the-buyer events and media and buyer visits to Northern Ireland.

> "Invest NI is committed to working with local Northern Ireland food and drink businesses to help them develop new business in GB and further afield"



RETAILER SPOTLIGHT: INDIE FUDE



Laura Anne Bradley, director at Indie Fude, celebrates Northern Ireland's innovative food scene

Indie Füde is a deli... But not like any other! We have two shops that work in unison to showcase the fabulous produce of the island of Ireland – both as wonderful local groceries, but also as special gifts in our range of beautiful hampers too. There's also an events side to the business, which gives us a wonderful way to demonstrate just how versatile and tasty our produce is. We really do love doing anything that lets us communicate our message.

We are all about local. Our key mission is to shout as loud as possible about the brilliant producers and makers the island of Ireland has to offer. From the cheese makers, to the chocolatiers and everything in-between. We are blessed with an extremely talented bunch and we want to show them off, and help to ensure they get the recognition they deserve.

It's vitally important to celebrate the Northern Irish food scene. We have the enviable combination of skilled makers and wonderful rich farmland, meaning much of our produce is unrivalled. Our small but perfectly formed range of cheese is second to none! From Mike's Fancy Cheese to Dart Mountain and Ballylisk - there is something for every palate! Our charcuterie producers are creating cured meats to rival that of the continent. Ispini and Corndale are both firm favourites of mine, and very popular with customers too.

In my opinion the food scene in Northern Ireland is still very young. Which makes it such an exciting time to be part of it! Every month there is someone new popping up with something interesting. Which means the whole industry in something to watch. Personally, I am looking forward to the continued growth of the Northern Irish cheese industry as there is plenty of potential there – including our own cheesy projects!

PRODUCER SPOTLIGHTS

BALLYLISK OF ARMAGH



Family-run Ballylisk Dairies, based in County Armagh, is an award-winning producer of a range of semi-soft white mould ripened cow's milk cheeses. It is perhaps best known for its flagship cheese, The Triple Rose: a luxurious triple creme. A smoked version is available as well as decadent creamy farmhouse Brie. A range of fruit preserves (Blackcurrant & Lime and Damson), chutneys (Spiced Pear and Balsamic Bramley Apple), oatcakes (Celery & Sea Salt, Traditional and Apple) and honey compliments the cheeses and is made for Ballylisk by other award-winning NI producers.

NATURAL UMBER

The audience for quality apple cider vinegar (ACV) is growing, but even among aficionados Natural Umber stands out. "Several years of trials have led to the creation of our fresh, naturally sweet tasting organic apple cider vinegar," begins Luke Mackle, sales and marketing executive. Unlike many ACVs, which can taste overly sharp, Natural Umber is enjoyable to drink whilst delivering all of the well-known benefits of apple cider vinegar. "In 2018, we were awarded the coveted three Great Taste stars from the Guild of Fine Food in London and went on to win the Golden Fork for Northern Ireland. Judges commented on the bold and well-rounded flavour of Natural Umber, stating it is 'Smooth and easy to drink with water', and has a 'syrupy viscosity, sweet apple character and a sharpness'. In 2019, Natural Umber won Gold in the Vinegar category at the Irish Food Awards, Blas na hEireann.



MOOCHA KOMBUCHA

Kombucha, an ancient fermented tea drink famed for its gut health-boosting properties, is flying high in the trend stakes across the UK, and Moocha Kombucha is a proud ambassador. The business was founded when founder Bronagh Quail travelled to Australia – where the drink has long been popular – and decided to bring it back to Northern Ireland. Made in small batches using organic single origin tea, there are four variants in the award-winning range: Origin, Lemon & Ginger, Strawberries and Aronia Berry. "We make Moocha the authentic way, from our own cultivated SCOBY – (Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria & Yeast)," begins Bronagh. "Our 'scobies' are fed only with certified organic ingredients - all natural, organic, slowly brewed and full of Moocha flavour. We bottle at source into glass bottles straight from the scoby, so each bottle is bursting with flavour and live cultures. We like to call it 'nature's tea' – naturally carbonated and full of beneficial bacteria and live cultures."



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We look forward to April 2023 when the industry comes together at the UK Food & Drink Shows, encompassing Farm Shop & Deli Show, Food & Drink Expo, National Convenience Show and Foodex Manufacturing Solutions.

Find out more at: farmshopanddelishow.co.uk

This is a trade event. No under 18s will be admitted.

WilliamReed

MEET THE PRODUCER

With managing director Matt Whelan at the helm, Fieldfare is offering solutions aplenty to retailers and consumers alike

The fine food industry has experienced quite the sea change over the past couple of years, with consumer needs and demands evolving almost overnight and businesses having to adapt swiftly to stay afloat. One business which has not only done that but thrived is Fieldfare, helmed by managing director Matt Whelan and on course to satisfy the growing demand for high quality frozen product for years to come.

Founded over 40 years ago in Kent, the family-owned business originally provided its customers with high quality, loose frozen fruit and vegetables and has evolved to supply pastries and meal solutions too. Fieldfare is currently stocked across the UK in farm shops, garden centres independent fine food retailers and delis. "Its concept has never been more relevant than it is right now," begins Matt. As a supplier of delicious, high quality frozen food, sold loose or with as little packaging as possible, the business's offering is perfectly suited to the modern consumer who demands more choice and is sustainability savvy.

In the context of heightened awareness of the dangers of food waste, not to mention a cost-of-living crisis, Fieldfare's simple yet effective concept allows shoppers to scoop as much or as little as they like – whether they are shopping for one, two or a lot more: the perfect solution to one of today's most prevalent challenges.

A unique proposition

Whilst quality frozen fruit and vegetables are still the company's heartland, the range has expanded over the years to include a wide variety of products including award winning pastries and convenient pop-in-the-oven meal makers, as well as tempting deserts, frozen fish and meat lines. "There is definitely something for everyone within our portfolio. Always looking at the market and what consumers want, our latest line of individually portioned desserts and party-pleaser bites are proving to be particularly popular with shoppers, as they look to spoil themselves and their families with small, everyday treats," Matt explains.





As a pioneer in the loose frozen foods concept and an innovator in the fine frozen food category, Fieldfare is perfectly placed to support *Speciality Food* readers. "Our carefully selected products and unique concept provides the fine food retailer with a desirable, destination frozen offering that is ideally suited to their environment."

Popular product range aside, what really makes Fieldfare stand out is its bespoke service and freezer frames, boxes and pods – a genuinely unique display system. "Our experienced team knows what works best in a variety of fine food outlets and from the moment a retailer expresses interest in stocking Fieldfare, we work closely with them to tailor our service to their needs," begins Matt. "To ensure that retailers get the best out of stocking Fieldfare, we help to curate a bespoke range, plan, fit and install the freezers and eye-catching branding to make the most of the available space.



"It doesn't stop there of course. Our after sales service and retailer support is extremely important to us. We maintain an ongoing dialogue with our stockists and offer quick and easy ordering, regular range reviews, POS and various marketing tools as part of our support programme.

"Furthermore, we actively and successfully promote our brand to consumers through social media channels, our ongoing advertising campaign, PR and influencer activity."

A smart stocking decision

With competition for prime independent retail space tight – especially during peak seasons such as Easter and Christmas – indies must take a smart approach to filling their stores. "The naturally longer shelf life of frozen means that, with proper stock management and care, there is no waste, unlike fresh or chilled," says Matt, meaning that over-ordering could be a thing of the past.

Another consideration, of course, is the energy consumption of freezers – unlike ambient items, the storage for Fieldfare products necessarily comes at a cost. "Fieldfare's chest freezers are more energy efficient than open chillers and 2.5 times more efficient than upright freezers. Typically using only 3.3 kwh of energy per day, they offer outlets a solution that, even at a time when energy bills are set to rise, helps to keep costs low and maximise profits."

As well as ticking a lot of smart business boxes, Fieldfare boasts a loyal audience of 40-60-year-old 'sophisticated foodies', as well as a growing portion of younger, environmentally-savvy shoppers. These consumers "are keen home cooks but appreciate the convenience that frozen foods offer and the consistent quality and great taste that they get from Fieldfare products," Matt explains, as well as the food waste-free and convenient format of the range.

Once the 'cheap' reserve of supermarket aisles, the perception of frozen produce has truly evolved – with shoppers recognising its benefits and happy to invest. According to Matt, "This will continue to evolve as shoppers discover premium frozen and the role the category has to play in their lives and how they can treat themselves with fine frozen foods." Having said that, "Frozen is better understood now than it was 10 years ago, but there is still work to be done, especially in the fine food sector."

> "Our role will continue to evolve as shoppers discover premium frozen and the role the category has to play in their lives and how they can treat themselves with fine frozen food"



PRODUCT NEWS

Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Cocoa Canopy boosts eco credentials

Hot chocolate bead-maker Cocoa Canopy has boosted its sustainability credentials with its new adoption of compostable packaging.

The result of a partnership with compostable packaging provider Futamura, creators of NatureFlex™ – a cellulose film – the brand's packaging now echoes the eco credentials of the product inside, hot chocolate beads made using cocoa beans sourced from sustainable farming communities and in support of The Rainforest Alliance.

Emma Wilson, business development manager at Cocoa Canopy, said, "Sustainability is about the journey and not the destination. Cocoa Canopy has always been about the provenance but, until we refreshed our brand, it wasn't talked about and wasn't mentioned on the packaging. Being kind to the planet is not just about business, I want to work for a pioneering company that my future grandchildren can be proud of."



Andy Sweetman, sales and marketing manager at Futamura, said, "We are delighted that our NatureFlex™ films are part of Cocoa Canopy's packaging solution, complementing the company's ethical values. Not only are the films derived from readily renewable cellulose, sourced from responsibly managed plantations, they are also fully certified for home and industrial composting after their use."

cocoacanopy.co.uk



Matthew's Flour releases new bake-at-home options

A new range of bread mixers has been launched by Matthews Cotswold Flour, each offering full instructions and containing carefully selected flours.

New to the range are: Ancient Cotswold Crunch Bread Mix, Heritage Bibury Barley Bread Mix, Cotswold Malted Rye Bread Mix, Sicilian Italian Pizza Mix, Cotswold Rye & Spelt Bread Mix and Traditional Stoneground Artisan White Bread Mix.

Bertie Matthews, managing director of Matthews Cotswold Flour, said, "We are all spending less time at home and not everyone has enough hours in the day to bake their own bread from scratch. Our customers told us that they were looking for a shortcut in the process, without compromising on the end result, and that is why we developed our new range of bread mixes."

cotswoldflour.com

ØKAR now supplied to indies



Two liqueurs from B Corp distiller ØKAR, which aims to encapsulate the heritage and natural resources of Australia, are now available for independents to stock.

ØKAR Island Bitter and ØKAR Coffee Mocha Liqueurs are being supplied to UK independents by Ten Locks.

ØKAR Island Bitter proudly utilises some of the rarest and most ancient ingredients on earth, native to the coastal rainforests of Australia, to create a well-balanced juicy, vibrant and bitter taste. It is an Australian take on the classic Italian drink amari, and offers an exciting alternative to the trending negroni.

ØKAR Mocha combines Mexican, Brazilian and Papuan coffee with cacao, coconut, wattleseed and Davidson Plum, native to Australia, to offer a unique taste of Australian's famous café culture. It can be served neat over ice or used in an espresso martini.

Laura Carter, managing director at ØKAR, said, "UK consumers are on the hunt for brands that are authentic, and ØKAR is the perfect solution. As a sustainable Australian spirit that works to improve agriculture standards, reduce energy usage and waste whilst also supporting the local community, it lends itself perfectly to decision makers seeking more eco-friendly – yet still playful – brands to stock."

ten-locks.com



Snacking innovation from Good Guys Bakehouse

The savoury biscuit scene is welcoming two new products from challenger brand Good Guys Smokehouse: Cheddar and Peppered Good Guys Biscuit Melts.

The light-textured, wafer-based biscuits are naturally low in fat and calories, containing 50% less fat than their counterparts and containing five calories per biscuit.

The biscuits are baked with real ingredients in an effort to put the 'good' into savoury biscuits, and made using Cheddar, chilli powder, black pepper and spices for a flavourful but melt-in-the-mouth snack.



Steve Monk, founder of Good Guys Bakehouse, said, "Our mission with Good Guys is to bring much needed innovation to grow the savoury biscuits category. This means keeping it simple, with great tasting healthier snacks baked with real ingredients.

"Whilst many shoppers look to savoury biscuits for a wholesome, healthier choice, we found most of the savoury snack biscuits to be high in fat and calories with this segment offering little to health-conscious consumers."

"Unlike many brands that spray flavourings and extra oils onto their snacks, we simply bake in real ingredients. This means our biscuits don't just taste real, they're low in fat and calories too, for guilt free snacking on the sofa!"

goodguysbakehouse.com



Do Goodly extends plant-based dip range

Two new plant-based dips have been launched by the award-winning Do Goodly dip brand: Nacho Cheeze and Roasted Red Pepper.

Nacho Cheeze Dip is made with cannellini beans, carrots, herbs and spices, while Roasted Red Pepper Dip is based on a traditional Catalan romesco sauce and combines red peppers with garlic, onions and cannellini beans.

Both dips are suitable for vegans, 100% natural, gluten-free, and contain high levels of protein.

The two new launches join the varied Do Goodly range of natural, plant-based dips which also contains Superstar Salsa Mighty Beetroot Borani, Smashed Pea Guacamole, and Tasty Tomato & Bean Houmous.

Richard Abbey, co-founder of Do Goodly, said, "We're excited to add these two unique dips to our growing range. We love creating dips that are totally natural and healthy, and also delicious - and these definitely fit the bill. Our Nacho Cheeze Dip can be enjoyed hot or cold and is perfect with tortillas or as a topping, while our Roasted Red Pepper Dip works beautifully as part of a spread or to add interest to your cooking."

dogoodlydips.com

New look for Seriously Low Carb

Producer of low carb, low sugar, high protein and high fibre bakery products, Seriously Low Carb, has revamped its look for 2023.

The new look comes hot on the heels of the brand's latest product launch – high protein vegan wraps that contain only 93 calories each.

Andy Welch, founder of Seriously Low Carb, said, "Our 250,000+ Low Carb Legends are amazingly supportive but even but since day one they've asked us to give them a Seriously Low Carb Wrap. There are others out there, but nothing until now that gives perfect harmony to taste, versatility and nutrition. People want a wrap that can envelop everything, and dry fries well when making quesadillas whilst supporting our keto & weight-loss friendly ambitions (35% fewer calories, 82% lower in carbs, 45% lower in sugar and 118% higher in fibre than their 'everyday equivalents!).You should never judge a book by its cover, but we needed to truly convey the game-changing nature of our expanding offer. Judging by the initial responses of our retailers we've more than ticked that box!"

seriouslylowcarb.com



"Getting packaging design to work for new products"



LAWRENCE BARNETT
WONDERLAND DESIGN

In these very challenging times, it is important that brands find meaningful ways to keep themselves relevant and fresh.

Launching new products can add value to the brand and category, as well as help to keep up with evolving consumer needs. Introducing new products helps brands grow by maintaining the interest of existing customers and attracting new ones.

The role of packaging design in how new products are presented is vitally important here. Packs too similar to existing product packs in the range may result in new products going unnoticed. Being too different runs other risks.

If you can get past the inevitable jumping through retailer and supplier hoops, there are some considerations that are worth thinking about when it comes to the pack design for new products.

1 LEVERAGE THE POWER OF THE BRAND

Brand recognition is the most crucial element of any pack design. The brand should never be compromised or diluted at the expense of the pack being more geared to communicating the new product, its range name or sub-brand. Brand comes first!

2 PRODUCT ROLE

Be clear about the role that any new products will be playing in your portfolio. Is it simply a range extension or do the new products take your brand in a different direction? This is important for the pack design – by understanding the products' role means that the design can be developed to reflect how you want your consumers to see your products.

3 USAGE AND OCCASION

How the products will be used is a key consideration. Design and messaging will play a big part in communicating the usage or occasion that the products have been created for. This can also be further helped by the use of distinctive range names or even sub brands to further enhance the usage message. Be sure to create that right balance between brand and product message or range name/sub-brand.

4 NEW FORMATS

With the launch of new products, there could be the opportunity to use innovative new formats that align well with the usage or occasion. An innovative format can help accentuate the new news, create stand out and difference, particularly if it is sustainable or easily recycled.

5 DIPPING A TOE IN THE WATER

Launching new products can seem daunting. It can be expensive and it is difficult to get new listings. Limited editions can be a good way to test new ideas and bring new news to the brand. Once again, pack design plays a big role in conveying the limited time only nature of the product. And, of course, those limited editions that prove successful can be continued as a permanent part of the range.

New product development is a big part of any brand's strategy. It can help attract new consumers as well as bring new news to the category, something that retailers are often looking for. To that end, packaging design needs to be thought about strategically too. It not only helps to present the brand consistently but also how to position its range of products to consumers. The combination of the pack graphics, its messaging and the packaging format can contrive to play a big part in how a brand's new product offers are presented.

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CENTRE



Help your customers kick-start their day the fine food way with these satisfying options

1 SRSLY
LOW-CARB BAKED GOODS

This array of low-carb and high-protein baked goods was created by endurance sports enthusiast Andy Welch who was keen to embrace a keto diet, yet unwilling to quell his deep-rooted bready urges. SRSLY's vision was to create a full-bodied portfolio of award-winning baked goods that mirrored the light-to-bite fluffiness of everyday bread whilst meeting keto's strict, low-carb vision.
seriouslylowcarb.com

2 MRS BRIDGES
PRESERVES

Mrs Bridges begins sourcing the very best produce from Scottish raspberries, strawberries and blackcurrants to citrus from Seville. Dedication to using traditional cooking methods ensures consistent quality of flavour in every jar. With over 150 products created exclusively for the independent retail sector, Mrs Bridges is a name that is synonymous with quality, luxury, and indulgence.
mrsbridges.co.uk

3 (UN)ORDINARY
BARISTA OAT DRINK

Made from 100% British oats, this product was created to pair perfectly with coffee. When steamed, it produces a smooth, consistent microfoam and adds the perfect texture to any espresso. It also has a wide range of applications in the kitchen. (Un)Ordinary Barista Oat Drink is excellent for cooking, baking and everyday use.
unordinaryoats.com



4 CLARENCE COURT BURFORD BROWN EGGS

Burford Brown eggs have a lovely, hard, glossy, deep brown shell and are perfect for poaching, boiling and frying as they retain their farm freshness. They have a delicious, dense golden yolk that will remind you of times gone by. Their divinely rich flavour makes them the perfect egg for any occasion. The eggs are sourced from Clarence Court's exclusive line of traditional breed birds who roam free on acres of England's green and pleasant land.
clarencecourt.co.uk

5 HAMPSTEAD TEA ROOIBOS

The Hampstead Tea farms are like secret gardens, where animals all live in harmony with the natural world. Organic farming methods transform the vitality of the soil, air, and water for a superior harvest — tea from the best estates, brought to you by Hampstead Tea. Discover this aromatic, full-bodied and satisfying single-estate Rooibos that provides a genuine caffeine alternative to your breakfast tea.
hampsteadtea.com

6 SWEET FREEDOM SYRUPS AND SPREADS

Multi-award-winning brand Sweet Freedom has breakfast covered, from rich and velvety chocolate spread to syrupy drizzles and silky-smooth hot chocolate. All vegan, no palm oil, no GMOs and naturally sweetened only with fruit, their 20-strong range has something for everyone. What's more, it is better for you, but still tastes utterly scrumptious.
sweetfreedom.co.uk

7 WICKS MANOR UNSMOKED BACON

This delicious unsmoked back bacon from Wicks Manor in Essex is cooked and dry cured by hand in the farm butchery for a great tasting and fuller flavour. The pigs are reared in open strawed yards with plenty of room to express their natural behaviours, because a happy, stress-free pig produces meat of the absolute highest quality. With an unrivalled flavour, this bacon is the perfect addition to any breakfast spread.
wicksmanor.com

COMMENTATORS



JOSIAH MELDRUM
HODMEDOD



LIZZY DOUGLAS
THE BLACK PIG



EMILY MORTON
OFC

CIRCLING UP

Regenerative farming is having a moment, but the virtuous circle set in motion could have longterm gains for you, your community, and our planet. Anna Blewett investigates



When M&S launched a high-profile collaboration with Wildfarmed recently, it was testament to the rise of a 'new' phenomenon that's probably been embedded in your business for years. In case you missed it, Wildfarmed is the Wiltshire-based grain cooperative on a mission to regenerate our soils and fight biodiversity loss by making low-input, regenerative principles work at scale. Its 42 growers use a range of agro-ecological methods (including sowing mutually-beneficial crops together and introducing animals where possible). The resulting flour is sold to indie bakeries and now a high street (or, increasingly out-of-town) behemoth.

One of its founders, Andy Cato of electronic dance duo Groove Armada, sold the rights to his band's back catalogue to buy a farm in France to run along agro-ecological lines; another founder, TV presenter George Lamb, has joined him in sharing their mission via TV, the broadsheets and multiple podcasts this autumn. And while an increasing number of farms are quietly adopting increasingly regenerative methods, Andy and George are the latest in a new wave of high-profile farmers – from Isabella Tree at Sussex's Knepp Estate to Jeremy Clarkson with his slightly ham-fisted attempts at rewilding – to bring agroecology into the public consciousness.

Making the case

So where does 'regenerative agriculture' fit in your business? Whether you run a farm shop stocking the produce from your own fields or just have a single biodynamic wine on your shelves, this emerging category has huge relevance to every fine food business. The term is rejected by some producers as being too woolly and ambiguous to apply to their own produce, but it's fast become shorthand for the organic, local, low-carbon, pasture-fed, fairly traded, or biodiversity-supporting produce that generates benefits for rural environments and the people who live in them. If regenerative principles gain traction in mainstream debate, it could mean the conversion of a new consumer base for the SKUs on your shelves with a local, sustainable story to tell. So, is it really happening?

"10 years ago, when we started as a community project talking about climate change and land-use change, we really struggled to get anyone interested in the more nuanced stories," says Josiah Meldrum, co-founder of Hodmedods. "That's definitely changed. There's definitely more readiness to tell these more complicated stories about soil, about ecology. Our customers are really keen on that extra information so I think that's a real shift. I remember presenting to an environmental group explaining we need a change in the way we farm and eat. They said 'Yes, of course... but it's not going to happen.' Now it feels feel like it is happening, which is quite heartening."

Flying the flag

As far as Josiah is concerned, there is a public appetite to explore the nitty gritty of food production. "Yes, I think that's absolutely the case," he suggests. "I think [the media] has historically been quite nervous about those complicated stories, believing their readers or viewers or listeners don't have the attention spans involved in grasping the detail. I think that's changing as well. It does feel like there's a much greater degree of interest in the detail of how food is produced too, alongside the quality. I mean, it has to be good food..."

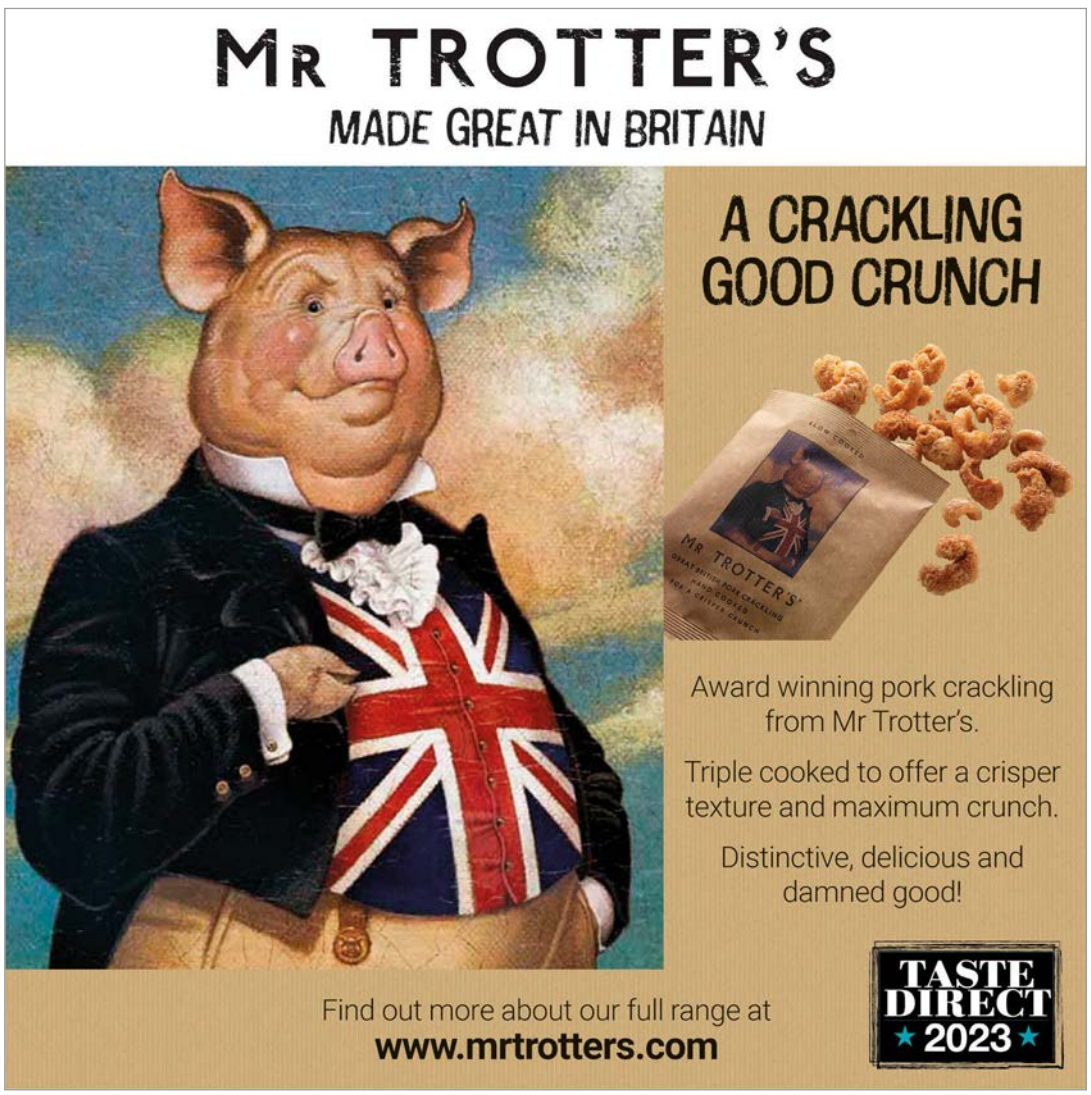
Of course, this good food, produced mindfully and priced equitably, costs more than the 'edible, food-like substances' (to quote Michael Pollan) that are widely sold in discounters. And amid a cost-of-living crisis and rampant food inflation, pricier foods can be and are being labelled as elitist. You may be among the very many retailers frustrated that the skilfully and sustainably produced food and drink you sell is seen this way. Butcher Lizzy Douglas, who runs The Black Pig in Deal, Kent, buys whole carcasses direct from her local small abattoir, itself supplied by extensively-run small farms. She works hard to sell every part of the animal and dissuade the unsustainable demand for only prime cuts. "I do try hard to make sure it's not an exclusive product," she says. "I try to keep a close eye on prices, and make sure there are always cheaper cuts for sale. I don't advocate people eating a lot of meat – I think they should eat less but better quality. It bothers me that meat produced this way becomes an elite thing that people don't feel is affordable."

Into the mainstream

Extending truly good food to every household, and spreading the regenerative farming practices that create it to every patch of farmland, is the scaling challenge being grasped by Wildfarmed and many more. This month, Oxford Farming Conference (OFC) – arguably conventional agriculture's biggest meet – convenes to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing its members. According to OFC chair Emily Norton, regenerative principles are very much on the agenda. "Science just keeps telling us the same message all the time," she says, "which is that by integrating environment and food production together we get healthier outcomes: healthier eco systems and healthier communities. It's not easy for policy makers to do that but increasingly it's the kind of thing farmers and those thinking about their own production systems are trying to do."

"Currently we have a food system priced around quantity not quality," she continues. "It's a willful blind spot that supply chains are allowed to have; they're not held to account. It's up to consumers to decide how healthy and sustainable they can afford to source their food. There's been some work done by the National Food Strategy to look at systemic solutions but it's entirely the focus of









OFC this year to ask 'where should we be doing things better?' Rather than 'let's make food cheaper in order to help consumers' it's about what the real systemic solutions are to that."

Despite the increasing urgency of our biodiversity crisis, and heightened awareness of farming's role in climate change resilience, #regenag practices remain fringe. But for how much longer? "We're commissioning the Oxford Food Conference report to ask the question: how should the conventional agri-food supply chains we see at the moment be regulated?" says Emily. "At the moment they're effectively regulated to provide calories safely, but should they be reflecting the need to produce food in an environmentally-positive way as well as produce food that's beneficial to consumer health and wellbeing? The Agriculture Act of 2020 talked about fair dealing with farmers; the question is what does 'fair dealing' mean in this new landscape where we have a good understanding of what food security means, we are painfully aware of the links between food and health, and we're painfully aware of the links between food production and environmental health?

A happy ending

What Emily hints at is shift in the whole food system to embed sustainability – the health of soils, the wellbeing of pollinating insects, a reduction in need for inputs – towards the regenerative end of the farming spectrum. "We got much better at understanding that in the context of Covid," she says, "when we understood the benefit of small individual acts, like mask wearing, to make significant change. So personally I feel we shouldn't premiumise sustainability – it's something that should be available by default to everybody, at a price point that doesn't exclude the poorest. At is very definition it's not sustainable if it's not for everybody."

While they wait for the food and drink sector to accept the need for future-proof approaches to food production, regenerative producers and the retailers they supply crack on with the important work of getting their excellent produce to the consumer at a price they're happy to pay. "Direct selling and adding value to produce is important to many of our diversified and nature-friendly farms," says Richard Wheeldon, the National Trust's senior national consultant on farming systems.

"Being able to articulate the provenance of produce is really important. We've supported some farmers with gaining such accreditations as Pasture for Life, Freedom Food and Soil Association status. These recognised industry standards can be really useful to help with sales of produce. Telling a story as part of nature-friendly farming is really important; some of our tenants have great social media to showcase the good work they are doing day-to-day. The direct contact with the consumer creates a great connection to nature and highlights the benefits of the farm on the local environment." Passing those stories on to your own customers will bring regenerative methods the attention they deserve, but also highlight the wider wins for the environment and your community that your shop's products represent.



CASE STUDY: CIDER PRESS CENTRE

The Dartington Trust is a pioneer in regenerative principles; Sarah Dollins is food and drink buyer for its estate shop



The wonderful thing about the network of regenerative enterprises we work with is that is doesn't feel like a supply chain, but a family. We look after our suppliers because we believe in them – bringing their stock to the shop it feels like an honour to pass their produce on to our customers.

I've been buying for food for a couple of years. It's a real passion. We've put a lot of work into moving our range on. TripAdvisor reviews used to say 'You're met with a wall of chutney and jam'. Not any more. We really have thought about the products we're selling to local and visitors. Take our olive oil: we were struggling to get something local of course, but the next best thing is a fantastic Portuguese olive oil shipped to Brixham under sail and delivered by electric van. It's called Shipped by Sail - so it has a low carbon footprint and comes from small family growers in Portugal. It isn't the cheapest that's out there but it has a fantastic story and is a great product, so we see customers choose that over others.

Around 90% of the products we stock are local; it's hard getting to that 100%. We share as much of that local information as we can with signage and shelf sitters...and of course through our staff. It can feel like a bit of a pressure getting those stories out there, so it's fantastic when a local brand communicates it themselves. For example, the Fresh Flour Company supplies us with fresh flour from grain grown on Dartington Estate land and milled nearby in Totnes. They're absolutely aligning their principles with Dartington and have really striking contemporary packaging that tells the whole story, which is fantastic.

We have to be 100% with the details we're passing on to the customer. When our local ice cream supplier looked at compostable and biodegradable packaging but decided not to go down that route we had to think again. We swapped to a local alternative with fully compostable packaging and since then our old supplier has told us it's gone biodegradable too. It's wonderful to be able to say we've encouraged that change. As retailers we can push the boundaries some times, and really make a change.



THE FUTURE OF FREE-FROM

Far from a passing trend, free-from diets are rising in popularity and indie retailers should cash in on this opportunity

COMMENTATORS



PHILIP LINARDOS
SHELFNOW



MATTHEW CHILES
GOURMET PARTNERS



ELLIE GUNN
COTSWOLD FAYRE



SALLY ASSINDER
GAROFALO

While vegans and coeliacs may seem like a minority, making up just 2-3% of the population, it is not just these groups who regularly purchase free-from products. In fact, a third of Brits consider themselves to be flexitarian – meaning they actively try to reduce meat consumption and opt for vegan or vegetarian choices – while 15% avoid gluten.

This means that there is plenty of scope for fine food retailers to cash in on the free-from sector. But what does the market look like in 2023, and what should indies be stocking to hit the trends?

An evolving market

As we enter 2023, consumers are increasingly looking for healthier options that still pack a punch, and mindfully opting for free-from.

As Philip Linardos, CEO of digital wholesaler ShelfNow, explains, "Over the last two years we have seen increasing demand from our buyers for vegan and free-from foods that are gluten-free, dairy-free and wheat-free. In the past six months, we have seen a steady rise in sales of free-from products and this increase in sales figure has been at 8.47%.

"As we enter 2023, we predict that the dairy-free market in particular will continue to grow as a wave of NPD hits the market and an increasing number of consumers opt for dairy-free products over traditional dairy.

"More and more consumers are making more mindful choices and they are looking for ways to cut down on high-fat and high-sugar foods. We see the increasing popularity of the free-from-foods market as a sign that people are becoming more conscious about their health."

Far from a passing trend, free-from diets are only gaining traction and they certainly aren't free-from flavour. "We believe that the 'Ketogenic' diet is here to stay and not just another fad. It is being adopted by a lot more people, and it's not just the younger generation who are interested in eating more healthy foods", Matthew Chiles, UK and EU sales manager at Gourmet Partners for free-from brand Olina's Bakehouse, adds.

In fact, while previously free-from products were only chosen by those who had specific dietary requirements, now the majority of consumers are interested in trying something new.

According to Ellie Gunn, chilled buyer at Cotswold Fayre, "Free-from products have become mainstream, consumers are no longer just buying free-from products out of necessity but through choice with environmental impact and health benefits in mind.

"We are more aware of ingredients which may cause a reaction in people with food allergies or intolerances and through offering a wide range of products which cater to these dietary requirements retailers can support consumers in their journey to better health."

Matthew agrees, "There is a growing number of consumers who select free-from products, not necessarily because they have strict dietary needs, but because they are choosing to include keto, low carb, or gluten-free products as part of a more balanced routine.

"Similar to the growth of the vegan sector over recent years, free-from products are no longer seen as a marginalised sub-sector of the shopping basket anymore and have become part of the mainstream."

Free-from in fine food

Vegan and gluten-free products may not seem synonymous with fine food retail on the surface, according to Ellie, "Although we are seeing a rise in popularity, we haven't yet seen huge demand for vegan and free-from products. Farms shops and delis aren't destinations for these types of products yet.

"However, as more consumers are now following a flexitarian diet, it is important to offer a strong range of vegan and free-from alternatives to keep up with growing consumer demand."

Philip adds, "There has been an explosion of free-from-food launches by brands of all sizes over the past decade but we are seeing some of the most exciting NPD from smaller, independent brands like our partners."

With smaller, artisan producers starting to make an impact in the sector, there is certainly an opportunity for fine food retailers to stand out with their offerings.



One example is Garofalo, whose 12-strong range of high-quality gluten-free pasta is popular amongst shoppers. Speaking to *Speciality Food*, Sally Assinder, UK marketing manager at Garofalo, comments, "We have the popular shapes like fusilli, penne and spaghetti in the range, but we also have more unusual gluten-free pasta shapes providing choice for anyone needing to or wishing to follow a gluten-free diet.

"We get feedback from customers who discover Garofalo gluten-free pasta telling us how thrilled they are to have the choice of pasta shapes they once enjoyed, plus a product that tastes like 'normal' pasta."







Cashing in on free-from

With so many free-from products now on the market, indies are certainly well-placed to offer something different to the multiples and cash in on the trend.

According to Ellie, "We are seeing advances in the technology used in plant-based product development resulting in improvements in the taste and texture of the products so it's really important that retailers keep up to date with new product launches. To upsell plant-based and gluten-free products we'd encourage retailers to run product tastings, so often there is a misconception that these products don't taste good but that is rarely the case and tasting the product will give consumers the confidence to purchase."

Hosting tastings is a great way to show off your free-from offering, and these types of marketing techniques often work even better when coinciding with events.

As Philip explains, "Introducing brand-new products during national or global events such as Veganuary and Healthy Eating Week will give retailers the opportunity to drive consumer excitement and interest in these ranges. Some specific initiatives that retailers could look to organise to upsell plant-based products, can centre on educating customers on why plant-based products can be better choices. There are various ways this can be done such as in-store point-of-sale display, staff training, or even social media amplification to attract footfall to the stores and trial the products.

"Furthermore, offering promotional discounts or organising an in-person pop-up event is always a really effective way to impress potential customers as pop-up stalls allow individuals to trial the products there and then, which can help to drive long-term sales significantly.

"Selling high-quality vegan and free-from options is key for retailers to introduce these products to customers who have no dietary preferences. We are finding that there is rapidly growing competition in the free-from market as more brands and products are launched.

"Not only can free-from products taste good, but they are also generally supported with top-notch branding that is challenging the bigger brands and products which are available in the market."

STOCK CHECK



GAROFALO GLUTEN-FREE CASARECCE

The special recipe with corn flour, rice, potatoes and quinoa is designed to create an excellent taste blend for coeliacs and the gluten intolerant.

pasta-garofalo.com/uk



OLINA'S SIMPLY SEED CRACKERS

Gluten and GMO-free, vegan and keto-friendly seeded crackers with hints of rosemary, made with compressed ancient grains and seeds.

gourmetfood.com.au/olinas-bakehouse



WHITE RABBIT CHICK'N ARRABBIATA

This vegan and gluten-free pizza features spicy chicken-free strips with succulent sundried tomatoes, and roast red onion, finished with a sprinkling of creamy mozzarisella.

whiterabbitpizza.co.uk



COCONUT COLLABORATIVE MANGO & PASSIONFRUIT

A thick and creamy coconut yogurt with the tropical taste of mangos and passion fruit and made with live cultures and a hearty dose of magnesium and potassium.

coconutco.co.uk

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olinasbakehouse.co.uk









WHAT'S NEW IN CHOCOLATE

It's not for nothing that chocolate is so well loved in the UK. We explore what's to come for this core category in 2023

COMMENTATORS



RICHARD CAINES
MINTEL



ELLA MACKAY
FATSO



MICHAEL FARHI
FARHI



KATE KEHOE
FMCG GURUS

Chocolate is something of an icon of the fine food industry. Indulgent and luxurious, with sustainability credentials and proud provenance if done well, it's a stalwart of the fine food retailer's shelves. While its real estate shows no sign of waning, 2023's shoppers are after something a little different– keep an eye out for eco points, health consciousness and that all important fine food sparkle to keep your chocolate sales booming this year.

Indeed, the retail market for chocolate is expected to be worth nearly £5.9 billion right now – up 15% on 2017 and boasting year-on-year growth of 3% – according to Mintel's recently published *Chocolate Confectionery – UK – 2022* report. "Volume sales have also grown, up 6% on 2017, despite the government focus on sugar reduction and consumer interest in healthy eating," explains Richard Caines, senior food and drink analyst at Mintel.

Indeed, while British consumers are more health-aware than in previous years, that's not to say that they are always willing to sacrifice the indulgence that chocolate provides. "The perception that better-for-you foods lack sensory appeal means consumers don't want to compromise factors like taste to achieve healthier lifestyles," states Kate Kehoe in FMCG Gurus' *Confectionery Consumption Habits in 2022* report, published in October.

Another trend – the rise of plant-based eating – is most certainly having an impact on the sector, with vegan/no animal ingredients claims featured on 18% of new launches in chocolate in 2021, up from 8% in 2017 according to Mintel's report.

An appetite for innovation

It also found that variety is the spice of life, with 44% of chocolate consumers stating that a chocolate brand that regularly launches new variations is a more attractive proposition than one that sticks to the same old range.

According to Ella Mackay, founder of FATSO, this consumer appetite for adventure is a boon for the sector. "On average, UK consumers purchase chocolate 43.6 times a year. And we're pretty certain that wouldn't be the case if consumers didn't have a plethora of choice. Our taste buds, taste range and appetite for discovery drives the foodies of the world. Therefore, even in one of the most saturated categories, there is always room to grow and expand. And let's face it, who could say no to more chocolate?"

Michael Farhi, director at RJF Farhi Ltd, has found that offering a wide selection of chocolate options offers a tangible boost to business. "Our wider product range promises a feast of chocolate confections for every occasion with something to suit every taste; chocolate-covered fruit and nuts in a range of chocolate coverings from cinnamon-dusted chocolate almonds to plump, juicy raisins." Ultimately, says Michael, "Farhi believes we should all indulge our inner chocoholic!"

What's to come in 2023

While the British shopper's appetite for chocolate will remain sweet, HFSS regulations will undoubtedly have an impact on the sector. "The current economic climate and income squeeze pushes the general public to look at more affordable options in general, but chocolate is still considered the most affordable form of gifting which is appreciated across the board," says Michael.

Quality, health and environmental concerns will maintain their power at the heart of conscientious shoppers' buying decisions – and brands are working hard to fulfill this growing demand will flourish. "As there is an ongoing growing and awareness with the importance of sustainability, quality ingredients and recyclable packaging, Farhi is constantly evolving to ensure that it meets requirements; improving the ingredients; working with palm oil-free chocolate, higher cocoa content, shellac-free in fully compostable, recyclable packaging solutions and very affordable within the luxury confectionery space (which is where the brand sits)," explains Michael.

"We're seeing a lot of innovation in vegan chocolate, finding alternatives to milk without reverting to dark," says Ella.

"We're also seeing more brands take on different flavours – incorporating the likes of sourdough bread! There's always space to be creative in the food sector, and it's great to be part of a category that doesn't show any signs of slowing down with its innovation. That said, the category needs to do far more to overcome long-standing issues around ethics in particular slavery within the cocoa farming industry."



> "There's always space to be creative in the food sector, and it's great to be part of a category that doesn't show any signs of slowing down with its innovation"







REPURPOSING FESTIVE CHEESE FOR THE NEW YEAR

Unsure how to switch up your offering in 2023? Discover ideas for repurposing those festive truckles and freshening up your shelves

Once the rush of Christmas is over and you've enjoyed a few well-earned days of rest and relaxation it's back to work for cheesemongers and delis. But how can indies refresh their stores in the new year to make an impact, and what's the best way to manage excess Christmas stock?

Dealing with leftover cheese

Ordering in Christmas cheese is always a delicate balance of having enough stock but not too much. But if you still have festive flavours left over, don't panic, there are still ways to sell them!

For Simon Jones, co-owner of Forest Deli in Coleford, "We don't have too much specific Christmas-themed stock in the shop so we hope to always sell out – nothing looks sadder than Santa Claus chocolates in February!

"But during the 'in-between' days people are still buying gifts and cheese for family visits and New Years' Eve dinner parties so it is still busy for hampers and wine and cheese if there is anything leftover."

Stephen Fleming, owner of George and Joseph in Leeds, agrees, "In the new year – certainly in the first couple of weeks – sales are slow as customers are finishing off their Christmas leftovers and also on a health kick! That said, quite a few people have late celebrations in January so we still find demand for festive cheese selections."

Stephen also finds ways to repurpose any lingering festive cheeses.

"Usually, if we have any leftover cheeses, they tend to be hard cheeses (which is good news as they keep for longer). We rotate these into our monthly subscription boxes and also showcase them in our tasting events, as well as sampling them out in the shop to increase sales", he adds.

Simon has recently started offering hot food at his deli, an easy way to incorporate cheeses that haven't sold whilst also avoiding food waste. He explains, "Through the winter we have hot food takeaways, mac 'n' cheese being a favourite along with soups and jacket potatoes, which keep people coming in."

Post-Christmas reset

The new year is a golden opportunity for a revamp, and as the Christmas paraphernalia comes down, new décor can go up.

According to Simon Jones, co-owner of Forest Deli, "The first task is to do some touch-ups on the paint to make sure all looks good and then replenish the shelves.

"This entails removing extra shelves we add into the shop just for Christmas and then filling our original ones back up with customer favourites and essentials."

"It's also a good time to move stock and displays around in the shop so any items that are shorter dated go to the eye-catching areas and any new lines are in logical sections and highlighted as 'new' to ensure the shop looks fresh and enticing."

Stephen adds, "After the festive period it's a good opportunity to review how our products performed over the past 12 months, and take the opportunity to introduce some new lines and rotate out some lines which are no longer performing as well."

Selling cheese in the new year

After the rush of Christmas, consumers are ready to reset and their demand changes from indulgence to health.

> "Usually, if we have any leftover cheeses, we rotate these into our monthly subscription boxes and showcase them in our tasting events"

As Simon explains, "New Years' Resolutions after a week or so of indulgence often revolve around diets and health so that needs to be taken into account.

"From apple cider vinegar with the mother, kombucha and sauerkraut to kimchi, all the products that have a good history of helping people to have a healthy gut are excellent ranges to have. Ours are all locally produced, and they are items that people will continue to purchase on an ongoing basis.

"But snacks and nuts on the healthier end of the market are always welcome because we all still need a treat!"

Another thing to consider in the new year is that there is always an upcoming foodie holiday, and after Christmas, shoppers will be looking for their Burns Night and Valentine's cheeses, and then before we know it Easter will be upon us.

As Stephen tells *Speciality Food*, "In January we have Burns Night, so we bring in a selection of Scottish cheeses for customers to enjoy after their haggis!"

Simon adds, "It's also never too early to start planning for Valentine's Day and Easter as the resolutions fall away and spring approaches."

Here's to another year of championing artisan quality and selling speciality cheeses!



Inspirational Cheese Retailers 2022: Cheese Etc, Reading

CUSTOMER HERO

If you're looking for a shop that celebrates community spirit and togetherness, look no further than Cheese Etc, The Pangbourne Cheese Shop. The cheesemonger, which has been owned by Ali and Jen Grimstone-Jones since 2015, is filled with more than 100 cheeses carefully selected from artisan producers. However, it's the shop's ability to put their customers at the heart of everything they do which makes them stand pride of place in their local community.

From chasing down tinned tomatoes to collecting shopping for customers who were wary of going out, Cheese Etc's dedication to the community was apparent – and it has continued in the wake of Covid. "We're all in it together," Jen says. "Pangbourne is such a lovely community. We all look out for each other around here."

The community feeling extends beyond the limits of the shop doors. In Pangbourne, Jen says, everyone knows everyone. "If we don't see a couple of our customers from one week to the next, we'll give them a call and check they're okay. We know lots of our customers by name, and that's just a lovely thing about working in this kind of place. You get to know people."

The lockdowns during the pandemic were tough on those who couldn't go out or who were suddenly working from home on their own. Cheese Etc became a gathering place for locals looking for a chance for human-to-human connection. "People would just pop in here for a couple of minutes just to talk to somebody," Jen says. "We've got loads of new customers that come in just for a tiny bit of cheese, but more to talk rather than to actually do any shopping."







Rowcliffe introduces plant-based cheese brand for Veganuary

Fine food distributor Rowcliffe is launching a range of vegan cheeses in time for Veganuary with artisan brand Honestly Tasty. They will be carrying the Blue, Shamembert and Brie alternatives, offering high-quality cheese minus the dairy for vegan-curious consumers.

Honestly Tasty uses a novel manufacturing method that draws on the processes of making dairy cheese, to create plant-based alternatives with recognisable tastes and textures. The brand has also recently undergone a packaging redesign, swapping tones of blue for a variety of block colours that stand out on a shelf.



Alongside this new stock, Rowcliffe will also be re-launching its Clemency Hall 'I Heart Cheddar' cheese for Valentine's Day, along with a new heart-shaped truckle, the 'I Heart Truly Truffle'.



Demand for Stilton fell in 2022



Once the must-have blue cheese for any festive cheeseboard, the classic Stilton appears to have fallen from grace. Instead, blue cheeses like Montagnolo Affine, Cambozola and soft British regional varieties are on the rise.

Speaking to the *Telegraph*, Bill Mathieson managing director at Long Clawson, explained, "There's a big concern about the mid-term health of Stilton. There's been a 14% decline in total sales in the past five years, which equates to 1,200 tonnes being taken out of the market."

In fact, according to consumer research carried out by the cheesemaker, the typical Stilton buyer is over 55 and only purchases the cheese three times a year, on average. Moreover, younger shoppers often perceive the cheese as being too strong and salty, leading to lower uptake amongst millennials.

But there is hope on the horizon for Stilton, as cheesemakers are determined to honour the British classic. As Bill put it, "We don't want Stilton to become a lost regional cheese. It's a fabulous British cheese."

France emerges as a key market for British artisan cheese

According to the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, in the second quarter of 2022, exports of British cheese to Europe were up 22% on the same period the year before (although 2021 was hampered by Brexit uncertainties.

Within this, France is emerging as a key market. In 2014, Neal's Yard Dairy exported €500,000 of British cheese to France; by 2021, the figure had jumped to €1 million, with France becoming its second-largest market after the United States.



NEWS IN BRIEF

ARTISAN CHEESE COMPANY OPENS NEW DELI AND CAFE

The Bedford Cheese Company has opened in the grounds of Whittlebury Park, selling artisan cheeses at its deli and cafe. It will sell cheese from both local and UK-based dairy farms, as well as some of the most popular European cheeses from its established cheese deli in central Bedford.

CHISWICK CHEESE MARKET RAISES MONEY FOR THE HOMELESS

Volunteer-run Chiswick Cheese Market, which charges British artisan cheese stallholders to take part, has donated £5,000 to The Upper Room, a charity based in Hammersmith which supports homeless people. According to a spokesperson from The Upper Room, "Since January, the number of people accessing UR4Meals has risen by 96% and at times reaches 120 per session.
"Instead of attending once per week people are now attending almost every day."

NO 2 POUND STREET BRANCHES INTO WHOLESALE

Based in the heart of Buckinghamshire, cheesemonger No 2 Pound Street has launched a wholesale business, supplying lesser-known British artisan cheeses on a national scale. Owner James Grant commented, "Our USP is that I will endeavour to find and support small cheesemakers that are often not seen elsewhere. British farming and cheesemaking needs as much backing as possible at the moment."



"Batting down the hatches"



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

Despite global warming, our climate is somewhat predictable in the UK. We are pretty much guaranteed to enjoy a deep spell of cold weather come January and February. So why don't we tempt you in with some hearty and robust cheeses to keep your spark and attention?

Washed rind cheese with heady rinds offer a punch that generally delivers a wake up call to most palates. Like marmite some people say... well in the cheese world turophiles and cheese afficionados generally adore this style of cheese.

Until recently we had thought the colouration of washed rind, being pink, orange and red is derivative only from Brevibaterium Linens. But hold on, we have found other salt tolerant cultures on the surface of these style of cheeses.

Washed rind cheeses are often pongy, but don't worry their bark is worse than their bite. Once you have gotten past the smell the cheese offers subtle sweet, meaty and fruity flavours. This style of cheese is great to enjoy on a cold night when snuggly indoors. Try Saval, this is great paired with good fatty meats and a good viscous Pinot Gris, or Gewurztraminer. Alternatively why not stick a piece of Saval in the oven for 10 minutes pierced with garlic, herbs and a wee glug of diluted cognac. Just get your artisan bread toasted and ready to dip – pickles are good with this as it cuts the fat. This is the cheese I am most in love with in the washed rind category. It is made by Robert Savage in Llandysul, Ceredigion – Wales. The grazing is fabulous here and the Jersey cows produce a high fat milk which really adds substance to this creamy and dense cheese. On colder nights it is also great with a wee dram of Welsh Whisky – you should try some from Teifi at their Da Mhile Distillery, it has a smooth well rounded flavour. It is seriously one of the best whiskies I have ever had and works like a dream with Saval. Just perfect for the cooler nights.

Now lets get really comfy with this other firm favourite of mine, Stichelton. We have been selling this as a wholesale cheese for a while now. It never disappoints. So as the days remain short and the nights draw in why not take a little time to discover and recommend this beauty. This cheese recipe was put together by the ex-cheesemaker of Daylesford Organic – Joe Schneider. It is a recipe not dissimilar to Stilton but of course it isn't because it is called Stichelton. The major difference is that this is raw milk, and the cheese is also aged on a little longer and the piercing is delayed a little longer.

Often other crumbly blue cheese is made and moved on a lot quicker. These cheeses tend to be a little more tonic on the back of the palate and not as gentle or well rounded in flavour. Stichelton on the other hand has a myriad of pleasing flavours. The rind offers yeasty meaty notes, the paste is rich buttery and fudgy, the blue is welcoming and beckons you in with a delightful herbaceous note that tingles on your tongue. Who needs to worry about the cold and dark nights when you can come home to this! This is quite seriously decadence and worth every penny.

The great thing about good raw milk and good pasteurised cheese is that you do not need to eat as big a piece as other more industrially and pasteurised cheeses. There is a depth of flavour that offers terroir. There are more minerals and goodness in artisan cheese this is fact. If you are a shop owner, recommend these cheeses immediately – your customers will flock back...

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COMMENTATORS



FIONA RICHMOND
SCOTLAND FOOD & DRINK



WILL DOCKER
BALGOVE LARDER



SAM PARSONS
BALCASKIE ESTATE



KEITH PATERSON
SHORE



RORY MELLIS
IJ MELLIS



MATTHEW TURNER
EDEN MILL DISTILLERY



MALCOLM ROUGHEAD
VISIT SCOTLAND

THE SCOTTISH OPPORTUNITY

Scottish food and drink, a jewel in the country's crown, features some of the world's most renowned produce and is perfectly tailored to speciality retail



Rugged landscapes, awe-inspiring views and hearty fare; Scotland has a lot going for it, not least its stunning array of food and drink.

As Fiona Richmond, head of regional food at Scotland Food and Drink explains, "Scotland's reputation as a land of food and drink speaks for itself. From clear, clean waters to fertile arable land, our environment is one of the key contributors to creating great tasting, quality produce. We truly have one of the best natural larders in the world."

This isn't new knowledge, as Will Docker, co-founder of Balgove Larder, explains, "Scotland has always punched well above its weight when it comes to world-class produce.

"Its temperate climate, ample rainfall and hardworking and resourceful inhabitants are the perfect ingredients to maximise the potential of this beautiful country. The traditional breeds of livestock have been bred over hundreds if not thousands of years to suit the landscape as a priority, resulting in slow-growing delicious meat.

"The regional microclimates and long daylight hours in the spring and summer provide a perfect variety of conditions for a variety of specialist crops and the seas have always been abundant with fish and shellfish. The low population density is a major plus point – lots of wild land for the deer and other game to run free."

Land of innovation

What makes Scottish produce so special, however, is the desire to innovate using unique local ingredients. According to Fiona, "We have a passionate and entrepreneurial industry filled with talented people that are driven to build a food and drink destination that is focused on quality. As a result, Scottish food and drink continues to push boundaries as one of Scotland's most successful sectors."

One example of this is SHORE, based in Wick, one of the most remote communities in the UK. As co-founder Keith Paterson, explains, "Scotland is fortunate to have an extensive larder of fantastic produce, an inspiration to anyone wanting to make artisan food. I think the variety of products stands out, from the traditional heritage favourites to an increasing mix of new and innovative products.

"At SHORE we showcase a plant-based hero that's grown right here on our doorstep – seaweed. We use it as a flavour base to make delicious snacks, pestos and broths.

"In many ways, we are bringing back a historical Scottish food product, one that is vital to the future of a sustainable food chain. The waters around the North of Scotland provide the perfect environment for nutritious seaweed to thrive. This abundant natural resource can be turned into a local superfood with just a little bit of know-how", he adds.

Similarly, Eden Mill Distillery, based in St Andrews, utilises local ingredients that can only be found in Scotland, bringing something truly unique to the fine food and drink industry.

Matthew Turner, marketing director for the brand, tells *Speciality Food*, "Drinks brands, like ourselves, pride themselves on using locally sourced ingredients and have a very strong sense of place, which is great for putting lesser-known, and often more remote, places on the map, encouraging people from all over the world to visit.

"Our location on the Scottish coastline inspired us to use sea buckthorn berries in our Original Gin, a botanical that thrives in harsh, salty conditions and that brings a tart berry flavour to this gin. Our Golf Gin – a nod to our St Andrews roots – has a seaweed base and a touch of quintessentially Scottish heather, which adds a floral undertone.

"We have also recently released Ramsay's Gin, created in collaboration with Michelin-star chef and fellow Scot Gordon Ramsay, which features Mara seaweed and honeyberries, both sourced in Fife."

Tailored to fine food retail

What makes Scottish produce well-placed to cater to fine foodies is its small-batch nature.

According to Fiona, "There are few mass-produced products in Scotland meaning that as well as providing premium produce, there is a level of exclusivity to much of what we make. These factors ensure that consumers are aware that every side of Scottish smoked salmon, small-batch beer, or craft gin is of the highest quality.

"Scottish products often have a strong sense of place, and articulating the farm-to-fork journey of products is a key driver of sales in the fine food market."

This is something Rory Mellis, director of IJ Mellis in Edinburgh, has also noticed in the Scottish artisan cheese sphere. "I think for me the reason Scottish produce is quite special is the community, we're still a small country. When there's a new cheese in Scotland, that's exciting to see as it's not getting washed up in all the new cheese production you see in mainland Europe.

"Also, a lot of people don't realise the rich history that we





have and so the stories behind the cheesemakers are really special", he explains.

When it comes to stocking Scottish produce in indie retail, Keith tells *Speciality Food* that, "Outside of luxuries, sustainability and better-for-you will be two key factors for artisan products moving forward, and local products that can combine one or both of these elements while still delivering on flavour will thrive."

"Our research shows that consumers are looking to connect with the people and places associated with their food and drink purchases and there is a growing trend in artisanal food especially", adds Malcolm Roughead, CEO of Visit Scotland.

Looking to the future

With such a rich bounty of artisan food and drink, the future looks bright for Scotland. As Will explains, "The Scottish food and drink sector has come such a long way in recent years with amazing historic foundations.

"We see this growth curve continuing, with increased interest in the country as a whole from the UK and international markets, both of which are fuelling the charge for quality produce. It will only have positive effects on the industry and continue to polish and refine what we do."

Fiona agrees, "Scottish produce continues to enjoy a strong reputation for quality and sales of Scottish brands within the UK have risen by 40% in the last ten years alone. It would be naïve not to acknowledge that times are difficult, this is true across all sectors. However, in hard times there are still opportunities for growth.

"We have record numbers of visitors coming to Scotland and I see there being a huge opportunity to grow our industry through tourism. In 2018, we launched Scotland's very first Food Tourism Action Plan in partnership with Scottish Tourism Alliance which encourages greater collaboration to show why we deserve to be a top destination on the culinary map.

"Whether it is new businesses forming to take a product to market, or more established brands embracing new revenue streams, there is a renewed sense of positivity about what the future holds, and collaboration has played such an important role in making that happen."

But it won't all be smooth sailing. According to Sarah Parsons, farm manager at the Balcaskie Estate in Fife, "The shape of our whole food and drink industry will change in the coming years, driven by economic, climate and social changes which are inevitable.

"If we are serious about protecting nature and providing a future for the next generations, we have to accept that 'outsourcing' responsibility for food production and distribution to large multinational corporations is not in our own best interests.

"Greater accountability for our choices requires understanding about those choices we make having a positive impact on our environment or the communities around us.

"It is well documented that money spent locally delivers directly back into our communities and food will become increasingly significant in local economic sustainability."

> "There are few mass-produced products in Scotland meaning that as well as providing premium produce, there is a level of exclusivity to much of what we make"







PRIDE OF SCOTLAND

Excite your customers with our tempting Scottish picks

MRS BRIDGES



Inspired by a famous cook – Kate Bridges – the Mrs Bridges brand we know today was launched in 1967 in Glasgow and is a purveyor of fine preserves, curds, condiments, and a luxury gifting range. Mrs Bridges begins sourcing the very best produce from Scottish raspberries, strawberries and blackcurrants to citrus from Seville. Dedication to using traditional cooking methods ensure consistent quality of flavour in every jar. With over 150 products created exclusively for the independent retail sector, Mrs Bridges is a name that has become synonymous with quality, luxury, and indulgence.
mrsbridges.co.uk

STAG BAKERIES



Stag Bakeries Ltd are proud to introduce the Hebridean Baker biscuit range, a collaboration between the Hebridean Baker himself, Coinneach MacLeod, and Stag Bakeries. Due to Coinneach's family links to the Outer Hebrides, there was a natural affinity between the Hebridean Baker and Stag Bakeries brands. The result is six varieties of sweet biscuits, inspired by the Hebridean way of life that offer homely comfort at any time of year, made in the picturesque Scottish Outer Hebrides.
stagbakeries.co.uk

ISLAND BAKERY



With the festivities of Christmas and the New Year behind us, January can be a time when we prefer to have a more virtuous nibble. Island Bakery Organic Oatcakes are the answer! Made with a unique blend of oats and extra virgin olive oil, our organic oatcakes are the perfect platform upon which to balance a chunk of cheese, a portion of pâté, or a soupçon of smoked salmon. Whatever takes your fancy! There are 2 Great Taste Award winners in the range. Choose from Original, Black Pepper or Three Seeds.
islandbakery.scot

WALKER'S SHORTBREAD



Walker's Shortbread maintains the tradition of producing the finest products to family recipes for both the retail and foodservice sectors. All Walker's shortbread is guaranteed to be made with the finest pure butter and to contain no artificial flavourings, colourings, or preservatives. Combining quality ingredients, superb packaging and product innovation has established Walker's as the leading brand of shortbread worldwide, generating appeal across over 100 widely spread overseas markets.
walkersshortbread.com



SCOTTISH CHEESES

Rory Mellis, director at IJ Mellis in Edinburgh, highlights five artisan Scottish cheeses that fine food retailers should consider stocking.



WEE COMRIE

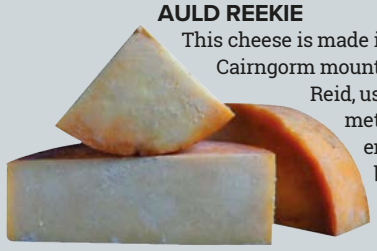
Made by Drew at Strathearn Cheese in a preserved POW camp in Comrie, Perthshire, this cheese is fresh and bright with a slightly sweet and buttery flavour. The unique texture is light and pillow-y, yet creamy. It's a favourite on the Mellis family cheeseboard!

ST ANDREWS FARMHOUSE CHEDDAR

Inspired by the renowned cheddars made down in Somerset, Jane Stewart of St. Andrews Farmhouse Cheese in Anstruther created this Scottish version. This cheddar is creamy, tangy and savoury with a hint of fresh grass and tropical fruit. The acidity in this Cheddar is perfectly balanced, giving it undeniable depth of flavour.



AULD REEKIE



This cheese is made in the eastern Cairngorm mountains by Alex Reid, using traditional methods employed by Scottish cheesemakers for centuries. It is smoked over whisky barrel shavings, giving it an oaky, smoky flavour with a hint of whisky and a tangy finish. A compelling option for lovers of smoked Cheddar.

WESTRAY WIFE



Nina and Jason Wilson make Westray Wife with milk from their herd of five cows before sending it to the I.J. Mellis Maturing Rooms. We mature this cheese carefully for at least five months, to allow it to develop rich, brothy, savoury and nutty flavours, and a compact texture resembling beloved alpine cheeses like Gruyère and Comté.

ELRICK LOG



Selina Cairns is perhaps one of the most well-regarded goat's cheese makers in Scotland. This cheese made in Lanarkshire is punchy, tart, and earthy with an ice-cream-like texture. Perfect for fans of a tangy goat's cheese, and an ideal accompaniment to both sweet and savoury chutneys.

> "We have a passionate and entrepreneurial industry filled with talented people that are driven to build a food and drink destination that is focused on quality"



SCOTLAND'S SPECIALITY FOOD SHOW 2023

Source Scotland's best at SEC Glasgow 22nd-24th January 2023

Scotland's reputation for fine food and drinks is renowned worldwide, so there is no better place to find and taste it than at Scotland's Speciality Food Show at the SEC in Glasgow from 22nd-24th January 2023.

Here some 120 producers from all corners of Scotland, and beyond, will showcase the latest delicious treats from pies to preserves, from spirits to shortbread and from chocolate to cheese. With small producers from Orkney, Mull, and Shetland to larger distilleries and makers from the glens and central belt, this show promises to be a haven of fine foods, tasty morsels and delicious drinks.

Farm shops, delis, restaurants, cafés and hotels and tourist outlets will all be able to source new products, re-connect with old friends and place orders for the summer 2023 season. Not only will the products be on show but buyers can feel and see the packaging and the extensive moves to more sustainable production that is a hallmark of Scottish food and drink.

New for 2023

New to the show for 2023 are Cruice, soft drinks from Glasgow, Hemp It Up, Persie Gin, Wark Farm Pies, Three Robins oat milk from Edinburgh, From Our Land to Your Hand/Ethos Olive and Angels Dare Cocktails from Glasgow.

Food from the regions has always been popular and it's great to see Tastes of Orkney and Food from Argyll hosting large stands brimming with innovative products. Orkney is a hotbed of creativity and on their large stand you can taste smoked fish from Jollys, cheese from the Island Smokery, bannocks from Westray Bakehouse and ice cream from the Orkney Creamery. Equally the range from Argyll includes Isle of Mull cheese, Tobermory fish, Tiree tea, Deer Island Distillers and Slainte Sauces.

> "One thing Scotland's Speciality Food Show always offers is a wide variety of innovative products from around the land. So whether you're after biscuits, unusual spirits, ice cream, savoury sauces or a traditional jam, there will be something there for every buyer. Large stands from the country's food distributors are another focus of originality as they will showcase products from any number of small producers. This Show is not to be missed as a major buying opportunity for the fine food industry so we look forward to welcoming you in Glasgow on 22nd January"
>
> MARK SAUNDERS, SHOW DIRECTOR



Valuable sessions

To help develop your business skills, the Talking Shop has a rich timetable of talks, panel discussions and masterclasses. Gary Ennis and team from Digital Boost will educate on elements of social media and e-commerce, Pinterest and engaging content; Adam Hardie will host an informative panel discussion on The Deposit Return Scheme (DRS); Visit Scotland will speak on the visitor experience; packaging and shop design will be explained by Julie Mills; and the Loves Local campaign will deliver their latest initiatives.

Nessie's Den will be there to entertain with emerging suppliers showcasing their products to respected retailers in a light -hearted session.

The Best Product Awards from the Show will be judged by leading food retailers, restauranteurs and supermarket buyers and the winners will be displayed in the heart of the Show.

Emma Niven from Loch Leven's Larder, and one of the 'Nessies' on Tuesday 24th January, said, "In times of challenging austerity our customers will scrutinise every pound spent, so it is ever more important that we underline our provenance which is why we like to source at Scotland's Speciality Food Show. The quality of produce, where it is from, and the integrity of the production methods are our USP, and unless we can maintain that trust with our customer we will be outdone by the multiples. Supporting local not only strengthens our brand but also addresses a lot of the climate/carbon concerns that our customer base is challenged by."



NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: SECC, Glasgow
WHEN: 22nd–24th January 2023
WEB: scotlandstradefairs.com







DRINKING MINDFULLY IN 2023

With consumers actively drinking more mindfully in 2023, low alcohol and adult soft drinks are big business, especially in speciality retail

COMMENTATORS



JENNIE INCH
HIGHLAND SPRING



HENRY CHEVALLIER GUILD
NONSUCH SHRUBS



JORDI BARRI
FLAX & KALE



LAURA WILLOUGHBY
CLUB SODA



PAUL MATTHEW
EVERLEAF



BRAD CROMPTON
SPIRIT OF BERMONDSEY



RACHEAL VAUGHAN JONES
REAL DRINKS CO

The low/no alcohol boom is far from over. In fact, as Racheal Vaughan Jones, marketing director at The REAL Drinks Co., explains, "55% of UK consumers admit to actively moderating their alcohol consumption and this has led to people seeking out better alternatives. The early adopters in the on-trade really helped to move things forward with high quality no/low serves that showed consumers you could have a great alcohol-free drink that was just as tasty and sophisticated as the full-strength equivalent."

But what are consumers looking for this year, and how are these beverages tailored to fine food and drink retail?

Driving demand

Demand seems to stem from increased interest in health post-Covid as people consume much more mindfully.

As Jennie Inch, brand manager at Highland Spring explains, "Today's consumers are increasingly aware of how the food and drink they consume impacts their health, and this has a knock-on effect for the food and drink industry. For example – swapping favourite products for healthier alternatives or trying new flavours with beneficial ingredients – including cutting out or down on alcohol, resulting in retailers pivoting their offering."

Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic definitely accelerated this shift towards a health-focused public. Henry Chevallier Guild, founder of Nonsuch Shrubs, adds, "The last three years have given us all a great deal of pause for thought, re-evaluating the things that are important to us and the priorities that we all have. Lifestyle choices are changing because of it, and drinking more mindfully is a movement that fits right into this.

"It also happens that the choice and range of alcohol-free drinks to choose from has not just expanded in recent years, but has greatly improved too. This encourages people to explore further and makes the choice to not a drink a great deal easier than it was a few years ago."

As Jordi Barri, CEO of Flax & Kale, puts it, "Now is the time for the 'Mindful Drinkers'! Many people are looking after themselves much more and much better than before. And this means drinking alcohol in moderation. This explains why sales of kombucha are booming."

This shift towards mindful drinking is largely driven by the younger generation, and according to Laura Willoughby, founder of Club Soda, "Mental health is the biggest cross-generational driver for a change in drinking habits, but this is coupled with a growing social acceptance that you don't have to drink.

"The fact you can now get something really delicious and non-alcoholic is making it easier for people to choose when and where and how they drink. It is a perfect storm of factors and there is still so much to look forward to."

Trends in low/no

As the popularity of lower-alcohol beverages increases, trends are emerging in the sector, and retailers would be wise to take note.

According to Henry, "It's impossible to get away from the straight 'replacement value' that an alcohol-free beer or spirit offers, and these account for the highest percentage of alcohol-free beers consumed and I think will continue to be the strongest performers within the sector.

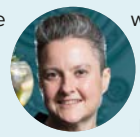
"Outside of this, it can be difficult to find any real alternatives with many outlets still offering beer and spirit alternatives only. Many consumers will not challenge this, but we feel there is a growing number within the sector who would like to see a broader range of options."

This is something Robyn has also noticed, as she adds, "There are lots of great alcohol-free beer and spirits brands but wine has been a little unloved but is now starting to come into its own as consumers look to expand their alcohol-free repertoires. REAL plays in the alt-wine space and this is a category that we are really excited to see evolve over the coming years."

As low and no becomes more high-end, shoppers are more discerning about their adult soft drinks. As Paul Matthew, founder of Everleaf, explains, "Consumers want to know about provenance, they want things that are local, or have other sourcing credentials. If they're spending more for a great product, they need to know where it's coming from. They're also concerned about the impact, so sustainability is increasingly important. Finally, I think consumers have been let down by some of the products on the market, so they're looking for bold

STOCKING FOR SUCCESS

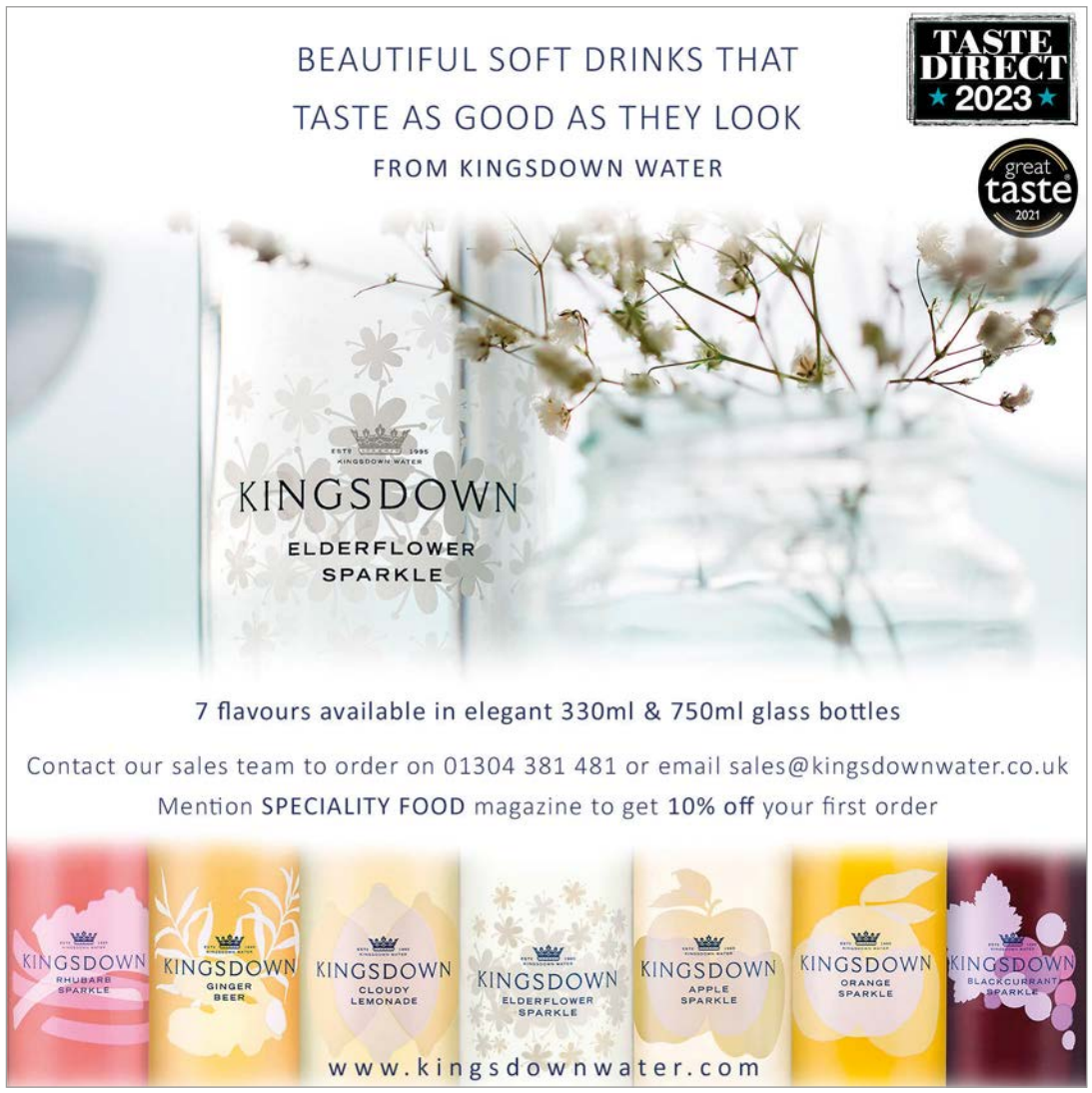
Low/no brands to watch with Laura Willoughby, Club Soda



I think 2023 will see more non-alcoholic wines. In the US, over 70% of alcohol-free sales are wine. It has been the hero category there, whereas beer was the breakthrough category here. Oddbird and Noughty are well-placed to grow this year. I suspect the UK will begin to warm to alcohol-free wine and wine alternatives.

The other big area to look at is functional products. Drinks that give you something extra, be that relaxation, social buzz or a sneaky health uplift.Sentia and Three Spirits are the brands to watch. It is also going to be another good year for beer. We are seeing mass adoption, and brands like Lucky Saint and Big Drop are showing every category what becoming mainstream looks like.

The options are wider than you think and could even include a premium sparkling tea like REAL or an alcohol-free mead like Bemuse. Your customers will love the tropical flavours from brands like Caléno; they have such bright branding that will really stand out in a display in January – if only they could bring the South American weather too!





complex products that deliver on flavour."

An interesting grey area in the sector is the rise of lighter spirits. For example, Spirit of Bermondsey produces a gin alternative that has a lower ABV at 25%.

As founder Brad Crompton explains, "In the last few years, statistics show that Brits are cutting back on their alcohol intake, but don't necessarily want to remove alcohol altogether! That's exactly what Trinity25 allows you to do."

Tailored to fine retail

No longer the preserve of soft drinks and posh sodas, the alcohol-free category is evolving, and in many respects, it is well-suited to fine food and drink retail so indies can certainly cash in.

As Henry explains, "There is a lot of consumer trust in the fine drink market and expectations of what alcohol-free can be needs to be. Whilst there is a huge demand for familiar experiences just without the alcohol, many consumers will increasingly demand a broader choice and to be catered to in the way they would be if they were drinking alcohol. There is still a long way to go on this front and the fine drink market should be where the benchmark is set."

But for Paul, it's more about the range available in the shop than the nature of the shop itself. "There's a big cross-over between premium alcohol consumers and premium low/no as you'd expect. We sell best in places that have a great drinks offering full-stop.

"Often the non-alcohol drinking occasions might be earlier in the week, so it's increasing opportunities to sell, which has to be attractive to the fine drink market. These consumers are the flavour-seekers, the connoisseurs, and they're increasingly looking for non-alcohol, so let's give them what they want!", he adds.

As Laura concludes, "Low and no is without a doubt tailored to fine retail, consumers trust their specialist retailers. They know you have impeccable taste. Curating an alcohol-free offer that you are proud of will delight your customers and provide an additional revenue stream."



2023 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



FLAX & KALE DRAGON LEMONADE KOMBUCHA

A sophisticated alternative to alcohol with the nutritional benefit of kombucha cultures and green tea and a sweet lemonade finish.

flaxandkale.com/en



EVERLEAF MOUNTAIN

A vibrant blend of 12 sustainably sourced botanicals that capture mountain flavours including cherry blossom, rosehip and strawberry. Crafted for pink gin drinkers.

everleafdrinks.com



LUCKY SAINT UNFILTERED LAGER

A satisfyingly fruity 0.5% lager with a refreshing, crisp citrus finish. Left unfiltered to allow for maximum flavour without the alcohol content.

luckysaint.co



JAMES WHITE DRINKS GREAT UNCLE CORNELIUS SPICED GINGER

A delicious non-alcoholic aperitif for those looking for an after-dinner drink to warm the cockles – can be served warm or over ice.

jameswhite.co.uk



LA BREWERY SPARKLING ENGLISH ROSE

A refreshing champagne alternative that is naturally non-alcoholic, bringing a sparkle to days when you're not drinking.

labrewery.co.uk



UNLTD IPA

This full-flavoured non-alcoholic IPA has aromas of citrus and tropical fruits, deep and complex malt flavours and a perfectly balanced bitter backbone.

unltd.beer



PENTIRE SEAWARD

This invigorating non-alcoholic spirit is a nod to the wild coastline of Cornwall. A blend of distilled native coastal plant life, it brings a zesty and floral freshness.

pentiredrinks.com



BELVOIR NON-ALCOHOLIC PASSIONFRUIT MARTINI

Made with real tropical fruit juices and Madagascan vanilla extract, this is a delicious exotic alternative to a classic passionfruit and vanilla cocktail.

belvoirfarm.co.uk



ODDBIRD SPUMANTE 0%

An alcohol-free sparkling wine from made entirely from Glera grapes from the Italian province of Treviso. It's fruity, floral, and slightly mineral, rested for 12 months in stainless steel.

oddbird.com



NONSUCH HEDGEROW AND ROSE SHRUB SHRUBS ROSE

A floral shrub that offers notes of red berries, sharp fruit and heady red roses, for mixing with either alcohol or soft drinks.

nonsuchshrubs.com

TASTE DIRECT ★ 2023 ★

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



Kingsdown Drinks

MIXED SAMPLE CASE
FIRST 100!

Since being founded in 1995, Kingsdown has become established as the leading premium British spring water and is supplied across the UK. Back in 2016 Kingsdown set out on a mission – quite simply to produce the highest quality and most beautifully packaged soft drinks available to British consumers. The result after two years of sourcing the very best ingredients, countless recipe trials and tastings, along with painstaking work on bottle and label designs, was a range of handcrafted Kingsdown Sparkling Pressés. Since their launch in 2018, initially in pubs and restaurants but more recently through a range of retail channels, the drinks have established a rapidly growing and enthusiastic following. There are currently seven flavours in the range, with a brand new flavour due to launch in 2023!

Mr Trotters

DISCOVERY SAMPLE BOX
FIRST 100!

Mr Trotter set out in 2011 to revolutionise the flavour and crunchability of pork scratchings. His revolutionary triple cooking process was designed to bring great taste and freshness to the humble scratching. Single cooking can leave leg rind tasting hard, fatty and subdued. But, by triple cooking, Mr Trotter can rest the rind between sessions and this creates a flavour to savour, enhanced yet further by Mr Trotter's bespoke seasonings. Mr Trotter's Pork Crunch, made from back rind, is a lighter option in the style of a moreish prawn cracker, whilst his Sausalamis offer a stylish and tasty alternative to other single serve meat snacks. Three Gifting options are also available, from his new 200gram drum, to his eight crackling pack, and his special beer and crackling giftpack. All of Mr Trotter's pork snacks are high in protein.



Anthon Berg

MIXED SAMPLE BOX
FIRST 50!

Danish confectioner Anthon Berg is renowned as the world's leading liquor-filled chocolate brand since 1924 and is known for their unique bottle-shaped chocolate and endorsed by some of the most internationally recognised spirit brands such as Cointreau, Drambuie, Remy Martin and more. Anthon Berg provide a fantastic assortment of premium gifting and sharing packs to suit all occasions, including their original chocolate liqueurs to the vibrant and on-trend chocolate cocktails, stirred and shaken by chocolatiers, chocolate-coated marzipan with fruit and liqueur, and their iconic luxury and indulgent marzipan bars. 100% of the cocoa used to make Anthon Berg chocolate is Rainforest Alliance-certified, and Anthon Berg is distributed in the UK by World of Sweets.





TWO RETAIL PACKS
FIRST 100!

Cocoa Canopy

Cocoa Canopy's drinking chocolate range has been carefully created using only a handful of ingredients – they're the only UK drinking chocolate brand to craft unique fine chocolate beads, for a superior, more intense flavour in every cup. Crafted for enjoying hot or iced as an alternative to coffee, there are five varieties in the range: Rich Dark, Smooth Milk, Salted Caramel, Milk & Dark and single origin 70% Ecuador Dark – Rich Dark and Ecuador Dark are also vegan-friendly. Cocoa Canopy are proud to be Rainforest Alliance certified, and part of the Cocoa Horizons sustainability scheme, which protects and improves the livelihoods and self-sustainability of cocoa farmers and their communities. All five varieties in the Cocoa Canopy range are made with sustainably sourced cocoa, each variety is palm oil-free and all packaging is 100% compostable, including the inner bag.

Sweet Freedom

TASTING SAMPLE PACK
FIRST 50!

Just launched by multi award-winning brand Sweet Freedom, CHOC POT Caramel chocolate spread is creamy, caramelly and utterly heavenly on toast, crumpets, stirred into porridge, generously slathered on pancakes or just by the spoonful! Along with all their other choc products, it's made with Fairtrade cocoa, all natural ingredients, no palm oil, no GMOs and sweetened only with fruit. With 20 products in the range, from chocolate syrups and spreads to drizzling syrups and natural sweeteners, there is something for every taste... astonishingly all are better for you yet taste utterly scrumptious. This delicious vegan range really delivers all of the goodies (and none of the nasties)! Stock up now... TV campaign in January 2023!





Wild Island

SAMPLE BOTTLE
FIRST 50!

Wild Island is an Isle of Wight-based small-batch producer of award-winning oils, dressings, and fruit vinegars. Their story is about simplicity; they believe that the best food is clean, pure, and natural. Being very highly attuned to the provenance and subtleties of ingredients is the cornerstone of a great dish and Wild Island admires chefs and home cooks alike who venerate these building blocks. This inspiration helps the team keep a keen focus on the role and interplay of ingredients. It is a pure joy to watch people prepare wonderful food and it is great to watch people enjoy eating it. This is what makes Wild Island tick. When they hear of a passionate cook or chef lifting a dish with one of their oils, dressings or vinegars, Wild Island feel that they are winning!

Deliciously Different Foods

Deliciously Different Foods is a producer of free-from and IBS-friendly condiments, sauces, mayos and salad dressings through their Deliciously Different brand. They have created an extensive range of everyday store cupboard essentials, all of which are vegan approved, gluten-free certified, exclude all 14 allergens, FODMAP friendly certified and contain no artificial preservatives, flavouring or colouring. They have won multiple awards at The Nourish Awards and The Free From Food Awards, including a Gold Award for their recently launched Mediterranean Inspired Herb Vegan Mayo. They also secured the award for Free From Christmas Awards Best Small Independent Brand 2022. Whilst their products are designed for anyone to enjoy, the additional certifications they have secured means that they are suitable for individuals following a Low Fodmap Diet or have certain other food intolerances.



SAMPLE PACK
FIRST 100!



SAMPLE BOX
FIRST 100!

Cakehead

Cakehead have the recipe for more customers! The team at Cakehead hand crafts and hand finishes award-winning cakes and bakes in their cakery based in Oakham, Rutland. The team has a passion for creating truly irresistible cakes. They use only the best and sustainably sourced ingredients in their cakes, from Belgian chocolate to luxurious caramel made with their own secret recipe. They even squeeze their lemons from fresh. Cakehead like to support local suppliers too so all of their ingredients are farm fresh where possible. They package and present them beautifully and then deliver them on time. It's an all-in commitment to quality cake that they call 'Beyond Baking'. Cakehead even have a wide range of vegan and gluten-free options so none of your customers have to miss out. Try a sample box and try their hand finished cakes for yourself!



Forest Feast

Forest Feast's new Vegan NUTM!LK Chocolate snacks range brings together decades of fruit, nut and snacking know-how to create a new chocolate that is 100% plant based with 30% less sugar. No cows involved, instead they use smooth and creamy almonds and cocoa beans for all to enjoy. The range is palm oil-free with no nasties and no gluten, all in recyclable packaging. The line-up includes share packs and impulse packs of NUTM!LK Chocolate Roasted Corn, NUTM!LK Chocolate Peanuts, NUTM!LK Chocolate Raisins & NUTM!LK Chocolate Mix.

FREE MIXED BOX
FIRST 100!

The REAL Drinks Co.

Naturally Fermented English Sparkling Tea, the REAL alcohol-free alternative to Champagne and sparkling wine. The REAL Drinks Co. exists so that everyone can live life, unconstrained, with or without alcohol. Fermenting the world's finest loose-leaf teas, they deliver captivating, alcohol-free Sparklings with all of the flavour and complexity of a fine sparkling wine. Give your customers the alternative that they've been looking for with Royal Flush and Dry Dragon Sparkling Teas. 100% natural, low in sugar and without any added flavourings. Champagne-style bottles offer a sense of theatre and occasion, with a satisfying 'pop' of the cork releasing delicious aromas and an unrivalled complexity of flavour. REAL's Sparkling Teas are the perfect partner for all occasions, whether that's alongside a lovingly prepared roast on a Sunday, catching up with friends on a weeknight or as a special gift for a weekend dinner party host.

MIXED TASTING BOX
FIRST 100!



TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ALL OFFERS

● Offers are only open to potential stockists of the products and are fulfilled at the producer's discretion ● One order per customer ● Offers may only be available to new customers, however this is at the producer's discretion ● There are no cash or credit alternatives to any 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 2023

TASTE DIRECT 2023

Getting your hands on free samples could not be easier. Simply fill out your details below or save yourself a stamp and visit tastedirect2023.com

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

YOUR DETAILS

Name:

Job Title:

Business Name:

Phone Number:

Mobile Number:

Business Type (Deli, Café etc)?

Do you have a licence to sell alcohol?

Delivery Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Company Website:

PLEASE SEND ME THE FOLLOWING SAMPLES:

● To meet current data protection legislation we need your permission to share your data with our Taste Direct partners. Tick here to accept. ❑

- Kingsdown Drinks ❑
- Mr Trotters ❑
- Anthon Berg ❑
- Cocoa Canopy ❑
- Sweet Freedom ❑
- Wild Island ❑
- Deliciously Different Foods ❑
- Cakehead ❑
- Forest Feast ❑
- The REAL Drinks Co. ❑

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Speciality Food Magazine
Taste Direct 2023, 21–23 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Road, Colchester, CO2 8JY

Alternatively, sign up online at tastedirect2023.com



FINAL CALL

We've jingled bells, decked the halls and rocked around the Christmas tree, and now a new year is upon us. What a whirlwind of a year! We emerged from a global pandemic, saw war break out in Ukraine, and launched into the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades.

But a new year offers a time to refresh, reset and restart. In fact, it brings the opportunity to set new goals, and make those changes you've always wanted to.

Why not start by considering which areas of your shop have you been neglecting and figuring out what your biggest priority is for 2023? Do you need to improve the customer experience on your website or change up the layout of your shop? What new products will you try this year? Setting a plan out on paper can make your intentions come to life.

Could your shop use a new lick of paint to bring it back to life, or a marketing refresh? Your plans don't have to be on a grand scale to be effective, simple tweaks can be equally game-changing. Is 2023 the year you finally join Instagram or TikTok for example, and make your mark in the social media sphere?

There are endless ways to improve your business, but at the heart of everything is the passion and spirit you bring to your shop. It's something we hear about time and time again that makes this sector so special. Whatever you choose to focus on this year – be it a physical upgrade or improving your technical mastery – and we hope you'll take us along on your journey.

We love to hear what our readers are doing and what's important to them. Are you looking for advice on website building or tips on reviving tired displays? Let us know and we will endeavour to bring you the answers. We also want to celebrate with you, so tell us about your plans for 2023 and any recent wins you've had – whether big or small!

Do you have a story to share or expertise to pass on? Please get in touch with us via victoria.smith@dcthomson.co.uk

5 MINUTES WITH
FREYA TWIGDEN, FOUNDER OF FIX8 KOMBUCHA



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
I can't imagine a life not in food and drink! Could I become a travel food/restaurant critic, does that count? I love watching 'Somebody feed Phil'. Maybe one day I could make 'Somebody feed Freya!'

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
Technically this one! I did however do some ad hoc internships before, and worked at Vita Coco as a brand ambassador whilst at university. Selling tropical coconut water in windy cold Edinburgh was a pretty hard gig!

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Making people feel good and fall in love with kombucha. (Also, trying to make gut health a bit sexier than it is perceived today!)

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
When I interned in a pickle shop in Berkeley, massaging cabbage for hours to make sauerkraut (daily!).

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?
I love dreaming up NPD – innovation is always a fun part! Working on the Fix8 brand, connecting with customers and seeing Fix8 on the shelf is always a pinch-me moment. Drinking my body weight in Fix8 daily, that's really the best part of the job though.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
Without a doubt: new line forms!

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
It is so dynamic! People will always need to eat and drink. Taste is constantly changing, reinventing itself, it's different across the world. It's an incredibly fast-moving and exciting industry to be in, you could never be bored.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
I had an AMAZING lobster bisque with orzo in Greece this summer – so probably that again, with plenty of Assyrtiko wine!

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
You can't eat an elephant in one sitting.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
A scorpion in Bangkok. Although it only tasted of bacon, it wasn't particularly nice.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
I read *Glittering a Turd* this year and it was one of the most inspiring and heart-wrenching books I've ever read!

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Definitely sweet.

BE CONNECTED



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TRIED & TESTED



BETTER NATURE BBQ TEMPEH STRIPS

Tempeh is a traditional Indonesian food made simply from cultured soybeans and water that is naturally high in protein and fibre, has a firm bite, and is quick and easy to cook. This variety from Better Nature is seasoned with a handful of carefully selected oils and spices, making them the perfect plant-based alternative for wraps, salads and stir-fries.
betternaturetempeh.co

CHEERFUL BUDDHA MATCHA LATTE

This unique coconut milk-based latte contains ceremonial quality Japanese Matcha tea, ashwagandha and vanilla for an energising and delicious drink. The use of coconut milk powder makes this drink suitable for dairy dodgers and vegans too, so everyone can enjoy the benefits. Whether added to cold oat milk and poured over ice or tipped into frothy coconut milk, this is definitely something different from your ususal coffee.
cheerfulbuddha.co.uk



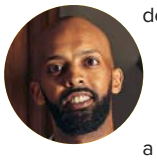


FLAX & KALE SYMBIOTIC PASSION KOMBUCHA

We all know that kombucha is bang on trend right now, and with Dry January gaining popularity, your customers will be on the hunt for new alcohol-free options to test out throughout the month. This pineapple and passionfruit variety offers a fruity twist to the gut-friendly drink, offering a natural sweetness and unique flavour to what's already on the market.
flaxandkale.com/en

THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Ahmed Abdalla, Legacy Restaurant



Legacy at The Grand, York, offers a modern British and Yorkshire-inspired menu that is focused on a carefully curated collaboration of flavours and locally sourced and seasonal ingredients. The eight-course tasting menu takes guests on a culinary journey alongside an exceptional wine list, crafted by our in-house sommelier, Derek Scaife.

The restaurant itself is an iconic setting, with expertly designed interiors by Faber which pays homage to the pioneering spirit of the inspiring engineers and architects of York's past. The ironwork, original oak panelling and blueprint murals remind us of the legacy left by those who helped shape York's rich history. Our Grade II listed building oozes individuality and the age of Edwardian England.

This has been a much-anticipated opening for the hotel that brings a new dimension to the hotel's culinary offering and presents a new dining destination in the region.

Great quality produce is a vital element of inspiration for our menu as we know every ingredient will pack a punch and be a taste sensation. It's amazing to see such an incredible array of high-quality producers in the surrounding area of York.

From land to sea, the proximity of our suppliers ensures that our dishes are always fresh, we even have beehives on the roof that produce the honey for our dishes. Our honey has floral notes due to the flowers on the York city walls.

I am delighted by the opportunity to look at things through a new lens, delivering traditional ingredients in an exciting new style whilst fully utilising the great produce Yorkshire has to offer.

It makes such a difference when you know where and whom your produce has come from.

But it's not just the produce I am inspired by, I have also been inspired by the processes of the pioneers of York's past; those individuals who turned their imagination into reality, which can now be seen in iconic buildings, revolutionary railways and the heritage of this great city.

We source our fish and shellfish from F.R. Fowler & Son, a third-generation traditional, family-run business that has been supplying the finest quality of fish, as well as Hodgson's Fish, who are brilliant and always have incredible fish. I've been to its base in Hartlepool which was a great way to see the produce up close and personal before choosing to cook with it.

Our meats are from R&J butchers who farm across the Yorkshire Dales, Moors and Vales or MNK butchers who are based roughly 10 minutes away from The Grand are also a supplier I use frequently.

It's vitally important to ensure we know where our produce is from and develop local relationships with our suppliers. In essence, I want Legacy to be a destination offering more than just great food – of course, this will be paramount, but I want to really elevate the guest experience from start to finish.

I look forward to enhancing The Grand's renowned traditional offering by utilising a modern approach to British cuisine with a real focus on Yorkshire provenance.

> "It's vitally important to ensure we know where our produce is from and develop local relationships with our suppliers"

PARTNER CONTENT

Garofalo



GIVE YOUR SHELVES A REFRESH THIS YEAR WITH ITALIAN CUISINE

Start 2023 with a bang and cash in on the new year's health kick by stocking your shelves with Mediterranean delicacies

It's the time of year for resolutions and goal-setting sessions, and for diets and healthy eating pledges. When consumers swear off chocolate and indulgences and vow to eat their vegetables, cut down on takeaways and cook meals at home.

This makes the new year the perfect time to refresh your shelves, and Italian is the perfect cuisine to stock up on. For example, fine food retailers can sing the praises of superfood-rich Mediterranean diets, which are shown to reduce the risk of developing conditions like high blood pressure and cholesterol as well as heart disease.

Use your knowledge and experience to explain just how easy it is to turn an Italian dish vegan and you'll win the favour of Veganuary followers, too. After all, Italian cuisine is endlessly flexible and whatever the season or reason, consumers will keep coming back to their favourites.

With many shoppers feeling the bite of food inflation and post-Christmas economic slump, it's time to shout about the benefits of authentic Italian products. Despite price pressures, consumers still show an inclination to support small businesses and upgrade their purchases where they can.

By showing customers why fine food shop products stand head and shoulders above anything they could find at a supermarket, retailers will win loyal customers for 2023 with Italian food.

Are you passionate about Italian food and drink? Get in touch via victoria.smith@dcthomson.co.uk.





LOCAL SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL FLAVOURS

At Sun Valley Rice, our full service team based in Guildford provides unparalleled support to customers across Europe and Africa, backed by five generations of experience. Our premium medium and short grain varieties, especially our California Calrose sushi rice, offer flavour and nutrition that elevate any dish.



SUN VALLEY RICE

USA Rice

Contact Claire for more information
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