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THE CHEESE SECTOR NOW
P. 26

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P. 11

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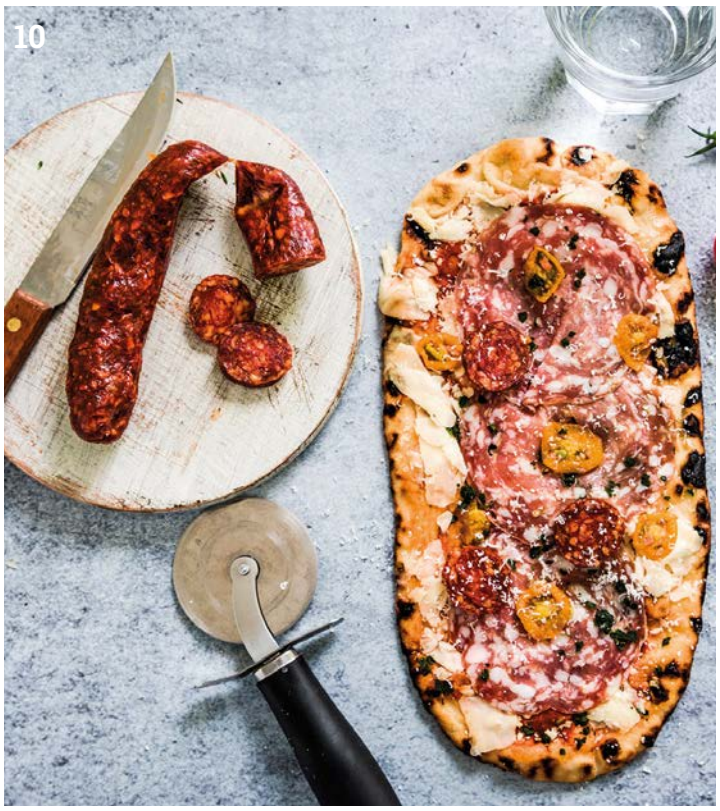


GARETH BATH:
WHAT'S NEXT FOR SPIRITS & MIXERS
P. 36

In this issue







6 **John Shepherd**, Partridges

8 **Stefano Cuomo,** Macknade

23 **James Grant**, No2 Pound Street

REGULARS

10 **Trend Watch: Posh Pizza**

20 **Centre Spread: Cheeseboard**

22 **Cheese Uncut**

24 **Counterpoint: Hosting Cheese Events**

38 **Last Words**

FEATURES

12 **Planning a Fine Food Christmas**

14 **Dial Up the Flavour**

16 **Spreading Success**

26 **Artisan Cheese in 2022**

30 **Essential Products**

34 **The Tech Effect**

36 **That's the Spirit**

EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the July/August issue of *Speciality Food*.

Summer is in full swing, which naturally means that fine food retail's festive plans are full steam ahead – we're celebrating with the first of our Christmas 2022 features, all about setting the right foundations for a successful festive season. In preparation for party season, we're also sharing insight into the spirits and mixers market, but that's not to say that we've left the warmer months behind. Indeed, within these pages you'll find stocking and selling suggestions for year-round favourites including condiments and jams, honeys and spreads, as well as an in-depth look at the rise of the 'posh pizza'.

We also share a report on the opportunities and challenges faced by the artisan cheese sector – from retailers to producers and distributors.

Plus, alongside this issue you'll find *Snack Buyer*, our annual delve into all things snacking and home to producer stories and snacking suggestions aplenty.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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20 YEARS OF SPECIALITY FOOD

As *Speciality Food* celebrates 20 years of informing the fine food sector, we take you through the top stories that have shaped the industry over the past two decades

2002 Following on the back of foot and mouth disease, *Speciality Food* was launched in July 2002, as consumer interest in British farming and focus on provenance increased. The first year of publishing kicked off with a positive spin after the farming crisis with Datamonitor predicting that speciality food sales in Europe would grow from £21.4 billion to £26.6 billion in 2006. This was coupled with a gain for purveyors of high-quality fresh food, as the FSA recommended that previously frozen fish should not be labelled as 'fresh'. At the end of the year, Feta cheese gained protected status, preserving the reputation of the UK's favourite Greek cheese.



2003 In 2003, Russia allowed dairy exports from the UK again after the foot and mouth epidemic prompted a temporary ban, and British food and drink exports were up 2%. By April, *Speciality Food* had launched a website and exhibited at IFE for the first time. During the summer, we revealed that the UK led the European sugar confectionery market, accounting for 23%, as indulgent fine food began its rise. In terms of policy, the government announced that £3 million was to be given to Food from Britain (now abolished) to promote the UK's regional food and drink industry, cementing the strong provenance of British farming.



2004 New olive oil regulations were announced in 2004 to champion provenance and processing as the fine food market grew. Gourmet food was on the rise, with 30% growth over the following five years predicted, while the vegetarian food market was worth £630m by 2004.

2005 Retailers were encouraged to invest in chilled product offerings in 2005, as the convenience and drinks market showed significant growth. Consumers were after chilled items for immediate consumption, not a far cry from the convenience boom we are experiencing now. Meanwhile, poultry farmers fought back against a Channel 4 *Dispatches* feature that showed shocking rearing and production methods of poultry farming and defended high-welfare British farming.

2006 In 2006 digital was really starting to grow, as online retailers accounted for half of the cash growth average. Sales were increasing 15 times faster than the retail average, surging ahead at 28.9%. Later in the year, the Soil Association called for a ban on the artificial sweetener aspartame, which is still used in over 6,000 food and drink products around the world today.

2007 *Speciality Food* launched its very first newsletter in 2007, keeping retailers informed about the industry directly via their inboxes. This was also the year that inflation caused a consumer spending slump, similar to our current financial crisis. David Cameron, then leader of the opposition, called for clear labelling of British food in a campaign for 'food patriotism' at the start of the year. Unfortunately, August saw another outbreak of foot and mouth disease and exports of British meat and livestock were temporarily banned.

2008 The year of 2008 saw British food in high demand abroad, as exports were up 10% from the previous year despite the foot and mouth outbreak that threatened to damage the UK food and drink sector. As the cost-of-living increased, Brits were curbing their spending, but they still wanted provenance and premium quality.





2009 Natural was the number one labelling claim in 2009, with one quarter of all new food and drinks launches using natural as a buzzword. This demonstrated the interest in additive and preservative-free products from consumers, as they searched for healthier food. But as the credit crunch continued, nostalgia was also trending, and sales of familiar comforts such as steak and ale pies were up 40% compared with the previous year.



2010 In 2010, the Scottish government injected a £20 million boost to the Scottish food and drink sector, strengthening Scotland's reputation as a world-renowned food producer. Consumers were keeping their purchases close to home, as 30% of consumers made a conscious move toward locally produced food, double the figure seen in 2006. But organic food was a low priority as only 9% of consumers sought out organic products.

2011 After extensive research, the FSA announced that cloned meat and dairy was safe for human consumption in 2011 after three cases were reported of meat linked to a cloned cow sold in the UK. Meanwhile, online food shopping was continuing to rise and experts predicted it would double by 2015. Sustainability and food security were brought into focus this year as Princess Anne spoke out about the worrying future of international food production, stating that "Everyone has their part to play". The year ended with the UK's first farm shop conference to discuss how to combat the economic climate and preserve fine food retail.

2012 2012 saw the first major campaign to tackle the slow demise of the high street, as 14.3% of the nation's high street shops were standing empty. The new operation to help failing shopping areas was set up in January and targeted eight towns in Yorkshire. British charcuterie began to grow in popularity, with stalls opening up throughout Borough Market, one of London's most renowned food and drink markets. Of course, 2012 also brought the Olympics to London, resulting in a surge in food sales as Brits stocked up on traditional delicacies and celebratory indulgence.

2013 2013 began with the butchery sector calling for more young people to learn the skills and art of the trade as industry figures worried traditional British butchery would be lost. Adding fuel to the fire, the FSA clamped down on rare meat, announcing that delis and farm shops that serve rare meat in on-site cafés and restaurants could face repercussions. New data revealed that Britain was 62% self-sufficient, compared to 75% in 1991, which prompted the National Farmers Union (NFU) to start a campaign encouraging consumers to buy British produce.

2014 Prince Charles showed his support for British farmers in 2014 as he accused the supermarkets of a lack of support for small producers, stating that multiples are happy to make profits from the hard work

of farmers whilst taking on "none of the risk" that farmers put up with in regard to low and fluctuating incomes. Later in the year, *The Organic Market Report,* published by The Soil Association, revealed that independents led the growth of the organic sector with an increase of 7%, making it a trend to watch.

2015 In 2015, fine food retailers united against supermarkets to promote genuine farm shops and farmers' markets after Lidl released adverts promoting its food in a farmers' market-style scene, calling into question its authenticity. In October, the National Wage increased from £6.50 to £6.70, making the luxury of extra staff slightly less affordable for indies. Off the back of indies leading the growth of organic, the Soil Association introduced a free support package for them to boost their organic sales further. The year ended with a cancer scare as the World Health Organisation stated that red and processed meat are carcinogenic, putting the meat industry at risk as shoppers worried about purchasing beef, lamb, pork and veal.

2016 Defra announced that 2016 was to be The Year of British Food – introducing an opportunity for retailers and consumers to support British-made food and drink. This was followed by the Soil Association launching the BOOM Awards, a celebration of quality, innovation, creativity and great taste in organic products, retailers and places to eat. Of course, 2016 was also the year that a big decision was made – whether the UK would remain in the European Union or leave. In June, voters decided that 'Brexit means Brexit', and with a 52% majority, Britain was set to leave.

2017 In 2017 Theresa May triggered Article 50, officially kickstarting Brexit, and around 700,000 contaminated eggs were said to have made their way to Britain in a scare that mainly rocked the supermarkets. This was also the year that British exports broke the £20bn barrier after increasing by over 10%.

2018 In 2018 the NFU highlighted the need for a focus on homegrown food. The stats showed that British food stocks would run bare by August 7th if the nation was fed only British food from January 1st – meaning the country produced just 60% of its own food. At the end of the year, a Europe-wide potato shortage was pinpointed as the reason behind a hike in prices for crisps and chips, with memorable storm the Beast from The East delaying planting and the summer heatwave not providing the correct conditions for spuds to grow.

2019 This year saw a big push on the vegan front as major supermarkets and chains released a hoard of new products, and The Veganuary campaign had its most successful year to date. In June, the government announced Natasha's Law, which required businesses to provide a full ingredients list on pre-packaged foods, following the tragic death of teenager Natasha Ednan-Laperouse after an allergic reaction to a Pret a Manger baguette that was insufficiently labelled. The year ended with a general election, with the Conservatives winning by the largest majority since the 1980s after Boris Johnson pledged to "Get Brexit Done" in his campaign.

2020 'Vegan' was once again the word on the fine food sector's lips at the start of 2020. Veganuary welcomed a record-breaking 400,000 vegan-curious and flexitarians into its fold, and a number of new product launches were unveiled, making it easier than ever for retailers to cater to their rising numbers. March brought the Covid-19 pandemic to the UK, and the country entered a national lockdown where cafés, restaurants and bars were forced to shut their doors to consumers. But while consumer confidence in the UK was at an all-time low thanks to Covid-19, a shift to local shopping was becoming apparent. Brexit took the spotlight off Covid-19 as the end of the transition period approached on 31st December and Britain officially left the European Union.

2021 January 2021 EU began with chaos as increased paperwork and trade delays began causing issues for retailers and producers. Meanwhile, the UK entered its third national lockdown, which would last until a phased reopening in March. May marked the return of indoor hospitality, with cafés and restaurants reopening in England, Wales and Scotland, and the government announced it was working on a free trade agreement with Australia, the first new deal following Brexit. The National Food Strategy was published, which contained a number of recommendations to improve the UK's food system, including introducing the world's first sugar and salt tax to drive reformulations, investing £1bn in innovation and trialling a programme where GPs could prescribe fruit and vegetables to improve diets. The final month of the year saw the arrival of the Omicron variant in the UK and the reintroduction of Covid-19 restrictions nationwide.

2022 So far in 2022, we have seen the start of a horrendous war in Ukraine after Russian forces invaded in February and the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades. But we have also seen the return of trade shows as *Speciality Food* attended IFE in London and Farm Shop & Deli in Birmingham. As we hit the mid-point of 2022, we hope that the war comes to a swift and peaceful end, and inflation begins to decrease in the lead-up to Christmas. Here's to another 20 years of *Speciality Food*!

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New report roadmaps future where champions of 'local' can thrive

A new report from EAT could help to mitigate climate disaster and ensure food security across the globe

Science-based global platform for food system transformation, EAT, is launching a second report on feeding a growing population sustainably.

The first EAT-Lancet Commission in 2019 convened 37 leading scientists from 16 countries to develop global scientific targets for healthy diets and sustainable food production.

The findings provided clear evidence that food impacts the health of our planet, advocating for what is known as the 'Planetary Health Diet' — a diet rich in plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes, with a 50% reduction of animal product consumption. In fact, the main finding of the report was that a radical transformation of the global food system is urgently needed to mitigate climate disaster, with an aim for 10 billion people to be eating the Planetary Health Diet by 2050.

While the first report was well received by the scientific community, British farming groups including the NFU and Soil Association had somewhat critical responses.

Speaking to *Speciality Food*, Rob Percival, head of food policy at the Soil Association explained, "The last EAT-Lancet report made a valuable contribution to the conversation over unhealthy and unsustainable diets, but it wasn't perfect.

"While it is crucial to look at the global picture, planetary diet targets must be tailored to local realities, looking at what is possible from farm to fork in each country and region. For example, the Soil Association supports the EAT-Lancet recommendation to eat less meat – with a 'less but better' approach – but the UK's countryside is well suited for grazing cattle, ideally on nature-rich grasslands, implying that meat and dairy from ruminant animals should continue to play an important role in the UK diet.

"What is crucial is that the UK government acts – it has done nothing to spark a shift to healthy and sustainable diets since the last EAT-Lancet report. They have also failed to act on last year's National Food Strategy recommendations, which laid out a UK-focused plan for shifting to sustainable diets and nature-friendly, agroecological farming at its core."

The winners of the Great Stock Giveaway 2022 revealed

Five retailers have won thousands of pounds worth of free stock as The Great Stock Giveaway, an initiative from *Speciality Food*, concluded this month

The *Speciality Food* team has worked tirelessly over the past few months to organise the Great Stock Giveaway, which brings some of the best new products in the fine food industry to the shelves of independent retailers across the UK, from the Scottish Highlands all the way to Suffolk.

Laura Roberts, owner of Laura's Larder in Orpington, said "I could not believe it when I was called to be told I'd won the Great Stock Giveaway, I never win anything, I was thrilled!"

She continued, "When the ambient stock turned up, I felt like Christmas had come early, a huge range of products. As the days continued, the chilled products arrived like a series of surprises, all very good quality thanks to the supplier relationships that *Speciality Food* has.

"We tested and stocked products accordingly. While there were some that wouldn't suit my little store, there are others we have already placed an order for a second delivery of. The Great Stock Giveaway was a great way for me to discover new products, and everyone in the shop had a really positive feeling about all the brands we received."

For Janet Williams, manager of Rothiemurchus Farm Shop in the Scottish Highlands, winning was a "complete shock". She told *Speciality Food*, "When I entered, I had no idea that we could possibly win!

"We were surprised to see the size of the pallet that was delivered, and we did not expect that quantity of products. The variety and quality of products was amazing, from biscuits, soap, yogurts, to non-alcoholic ciders.

"A few of the items that were sent, we already had in stock or had previously ordered but many were completely new to us and would order in the future. We particularly found the energy drink The Horny Goat amusing and it sold rather well in the shop. Some products were rather unusual, and exciting for customers to see.

"It is a great opportunity for products and companies to branch out but also for retailers to get some new, exciting stock to try. I would definitely recommend retailers signing up as it is a fantastic competition, and it is all free so what is not to love!"

Similarly, Rachel Hardy, manager of Earsham Street Deli in Bungay, was "absolutely thrilled" to win the Great Stock Giveaway. "We were blown away by the generosity with the samples and the diverse range of products sent, jams, chutney, drinks, crisps, pasta, chocolate, fish, yoghurts, even soap and so much more.

"It wasn't just one variety. In some instances, it was three or four we were sent which enabled us to display them to make a bigger impact on the shop floor. After the main delivery we then kept receiving random parcels, it was the gift that kept on giving!

"We have all enjoyed sampling the products, some we already stocked, some we had considered stocking and others which were totally new to us. It has provided a great opportunity for us to offer our customers new products, which we are always on the lookout for, and do tastings too, which always goes down well."

The Great Stock Giveaway aimed to foster connections between fine food retailers and producers and provide small businesses with a much-needed treat. Burwash Larder in Cambridge and Nicholson's Butchers in Whitley Bay were also winners.



"Salmon enchanted evenings"



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES

Plus ca change. In the 1980s the celebrated food writer, BBC presenter, deli owner and all-round icon for speciality food, Glyn Christian, kindly contributed some articles for the *Partridges Magazine*.

For those of you not acquainted with this fine publication it is basically our in-house Christmas catalogue and has been published every year since 1986. It was around the time that Glyn published his pioneering *Delicatessen Food Handbook* which is still available to buy today.

In those days a number of leading food and wine writers also contributed pieces for us I am pleased to say – for example Robert Carrier, Harry Waugh, Ken Hom, George Melly, Angus McGill and Sir Dirk Bogarde.

However, it was Glyn's articles that always seemed to attract the most positive feedback from customers. In a summer edition he was proposing to call one of his articles 'Salmon Enchanted Evening'. That article never appeared and I am not sure if it ever did in another publication but it was a brilliant play on the title *Some Enchanted Evening* – the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic from South Pacific which is regarded by many as their finest piece of work.

The title particularly resonated with us because it captured the role that salmon in all its various guises played on summer evenings in our part of London. Especially because in those days we stayed open later than any of our competitors and salmon was one of our best-selling products in the evenings. At the time we used to hand slice it on the counter, sell it in packets, have poached salmon displayed in the front window, sell salmon pieces or offcuts and make up our own poached salmon fishcakes which Jane Grigson kindly made a reference to in her book about English food.

I remember particularly around the time of the Silver Jubilee in 1977, but also during consecutive summers, that smoked salmon and Champagne made a formidable contribution to our summer sales.

Fast forward to the Platinum Jubilee several decades later and I am pleased to say that this formidable combination still performs very well. In fact, on Saturday 4th June 2022 during the Jubilee weekend, in pleasant summer weather, we achieved our highest ever sales of these two products on a single day.

Looking at the bestsellers list of products by quantity at Partridges the following categories performed very well: mineral waters, soft drinks, ice cream, Partridges gin and tonic, fruit and veg, wine, beer, Prosecco, beverages from the coffee shop, salads from the deli, and I give a special round of applause for our signature dish, in-house duck confit sandwiches.

In terms of brands represented on the bestsellers list of June 4th 2022 it is good to also note the presence of Moet, Evian, Volvic, Gordons, Pol Roger, Veuve Cliquot, Charbonnel et Walker and Alderton Marmalade Ham, all of which were good sellers at the time of Glyn's article.

I have often been confused by the usage of the phrase 'plus ca change', probably because it's often written in its abbreviated version. But 'the more it changes, the more it stays the same' for me sums up speciality food.

The best food, the best wines and the best service will always be the key ingredients for the best speciality food shops. Everyone knows it, but sometimes we forget.

Here's looking forward to many more Salmon Enchanted Evenings.

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THE STORY BEHIND THE STATS

6.9%

After a devastating reduction in footfall during the Covid-19 pandemic, the British Retail Consortium has reported a return to in-person shopping over the past few months. In fact, total UK footfall increased by 6.9% over the Jubilee weekend, compared with the average for May 2022, with high streets seeing the strongest performance at 3.1% growth compared with the average for May 2022, according to the report.

80%

Bottle suppliers are experiencing problems sourcing glassware as the production is energy-intensive, pushing its price 80% higher over the past year. This is a major blow for the UK's once-prosperous smaller bottled brands, which are already struggling with surging costs and, in many cases, have not yet fully recovered from the economic hit of the pandemic.

125

The International Cheese and Dairy Awards celebrated 125 years this year as it returned to its new location at Bingley Hall, Staffordshire. The event saw the title of Supreme Cheese Champion awarded to English cheesemakers Long Clawson Dairy for their Shropshire Blue. Long Clawson Dairy was awarded the accolade after being awarded a series of gold and silver medals across the categories.

15%

According to a new report from the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), the rise in the cost of essential food items is likely to reach a peak of up to 15% this summer, the highest figure in 20 years, and will last much longer than initially predicted. This is due to several factors, including the impact of the war in Ukraine, pre-existing supply chain challenges, and limited effectiveness of monetary and fiscal policy.

NEWS IN BRIEF

BEEF AND LAMB AN IMPORTANT PART OF SUSTAINABLE DIETS

Despite environmental claims against beef, the Sustainable Food Trust argues that these British red meats could become the backbone of a sustainable diet in the future in its latest report, *Feeding Britain from the Ground Up*. In the report, 100% grass-fed and mainly grass-fed beef, lamb and dairy, would form an important part of our diets, becoming the new staple livestock products. As fine food retailers champion high-quality, sustainably produced meat products, this spells good news for indies over the multiples.

CHARITIES CALL FOR SALT TAX

Leading health charities including The British Heart Foundation have been calling on ministers to bring in a sugar tax-style new levy on the amount of salt in food to reduce heart attacks and strokes, Britain's biggest killers. This comes after the government's Food Strategy was unveiled in June.

BIOFUEL PRODUCTION TO BE TEMPORARILY PAUSED

According to outgoing prime minister, the process of growing grains for biofuel is contributing to increased prices of food as the world struggles to adapt without its biggest exporters of wheat, Russia and Ukraine. Boris Johnson has proposed a temporary pause on biofuel production to grow more food for human consumption in an effort to drive down food inflation at the G7 conference.



Winter

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"What is value?"



STEFANO CUOMO
MACKNADE

This is seemingly always a tricky one... as it is different things to different folk! So, what I focus on, learnt at the knee of my parents, from the earliest days, skuttling around the shop floor, was the Italian pillar of 'Qualita/Prezzo'... that is to say, quality must always reflect price!

In all we do at Macknade, we aim to make sure we deliver the best quality we can for the price point we believe suits our customers and supports the product correctly. That is what leads to real value.

When the internet first started to bite, I remember the excitement of its endless possibilities being chased down by the trepidation of a future free of the need for real, personable retailers. Those would be algorithms dictating 'choice' for customers sat at screens, no longer needing to interact with a grocer!

What I of course leaned into were those lessons I learnt growing up and the valuable truth that our retailers are not simply individuals putting stock on the shelf. Rather, they are fonts of knowledge, curating ranges that deliver absolute value for their community! This means knowing our customers as intimately as we know our products and identifying the price that will stitch all of it together – 'Qualita/Prezzo'.

The example I love is the skill of the monger in appreciating at what age profile nuances in flavour change the price of a cheese. That sweet spot of the right profile to the right price point is the learned genius of the personable retailer, led by broad and varied knowledge, rather than just accumulated data, which leads to absolute value.

The pressures of this year have meant that value has come to the forefront and is now intertwined with affordability. At Macknade, the team are pushing for 'value without compromise', which recognises that when we, as shoppers, need to cut costs, we also want to be supported to enjoy quality.

A key aspect of this is highlighting our own pricing structure and this is never clearer than in the greengrocery department.

Independents are key in offering a sincere alternative to the dominant supermarket offer and never more so than in the seasonal fecundity of summer and early autumn.

It is always wonderful listening to customers talking so fondly about Macknade, often expressing how much of a treat a trip to our food hall is. 'I always leave with an empty wallet' is a phrase I often hear!

The problem is that such affectionate humour can imbed itself as a perception of expensiveness and as such a self-fulfilling barrier – 'I don't go because I can't stop myself buying so much!'.

I know this is usually meant as way of a compliment, aligning the quality of what we sell with a desire to buy it all, yet cached in the thought that it will be expensive. Yes, a jar of local honey is three times the price of its imported, insipid, international cousin, but so too is the quality.

Let's look at fruit and veg, for example. The prices are much closer, but quality is often significantly better, yet consumers fall into the trap of believing the independent to be 'pricey' and still steer clear.

We have started to track more thoroughly our produce prices and compare them to our neighbouring supermarkets.

Comparing like-for-like with the premium supermarkets, we often find our prices do match. Further still, consider our prices alongside the 'middle grounders'. Theirs may be marginally lower but their quality matches that reduction in price too, and when we look for local it is hard to find it on any of the supermarket shelves, let alone near prices we can offer!

The discounters are on a strategy of their own. When you bleed your team to make the lowest prices possible, it does not feel like a productive long-term strategy for our society, and not subsequently for the business either.

This is where 'value without compromise' kicks in and where Qualita/Prezzo is so key. Yes, pay less and get less... whether that is less ethics through your discounters or less quality through your standard supermarkets.

As independents, our strength is our quality, driven by our service, our products, and our knowledge. Often, we undermine this ourselves by our inability to shout out about these strengths effectively.

Our aim this year is not to just hunker down in this new economic terrain, but to get the message out that you don't have to compromise on quality when prices rise. In fact, it is an opportunity for operators and consumers to readjust our prejudices and to shop differently – to shop better.

Recognise that, seen through the prism of the right quality at the right price, supported by measured consumption, the experience of shopping in a quality independent is no more expensive but so much richer... that is real value.

> "The experience of shopping in an independent is no more expensive but so much richer... that is real value"

How plans to introduce imperial measurements could affect indie retail

An introduction of imperial measurements could be on its way as the British government harnesses Jubilee nostalgia – but what does this mean for indies?

At present, the UK currently uses a mix of imperial and metric measurements as part of EU rules which have been carried over post-Brexit, meaning traders can use imperial measurements alongside metric, but they cannot be more prominent.

But the government is considering the re-introduction of imperial as the main method of measurement in Britain as part of a wider post-Brexit plan. After almost 60 years since the metric system was introduced, there is only a small percentage of the population who remember how to use imperial measurements – and fewer still who can easily convert from metric to imperial.

Mark Kacary, managing director of The Norfolk Deli, remembers the introduction of the metric system and believes that returning to imperial would cause unnecessary work for small businesses at a time of crisis.

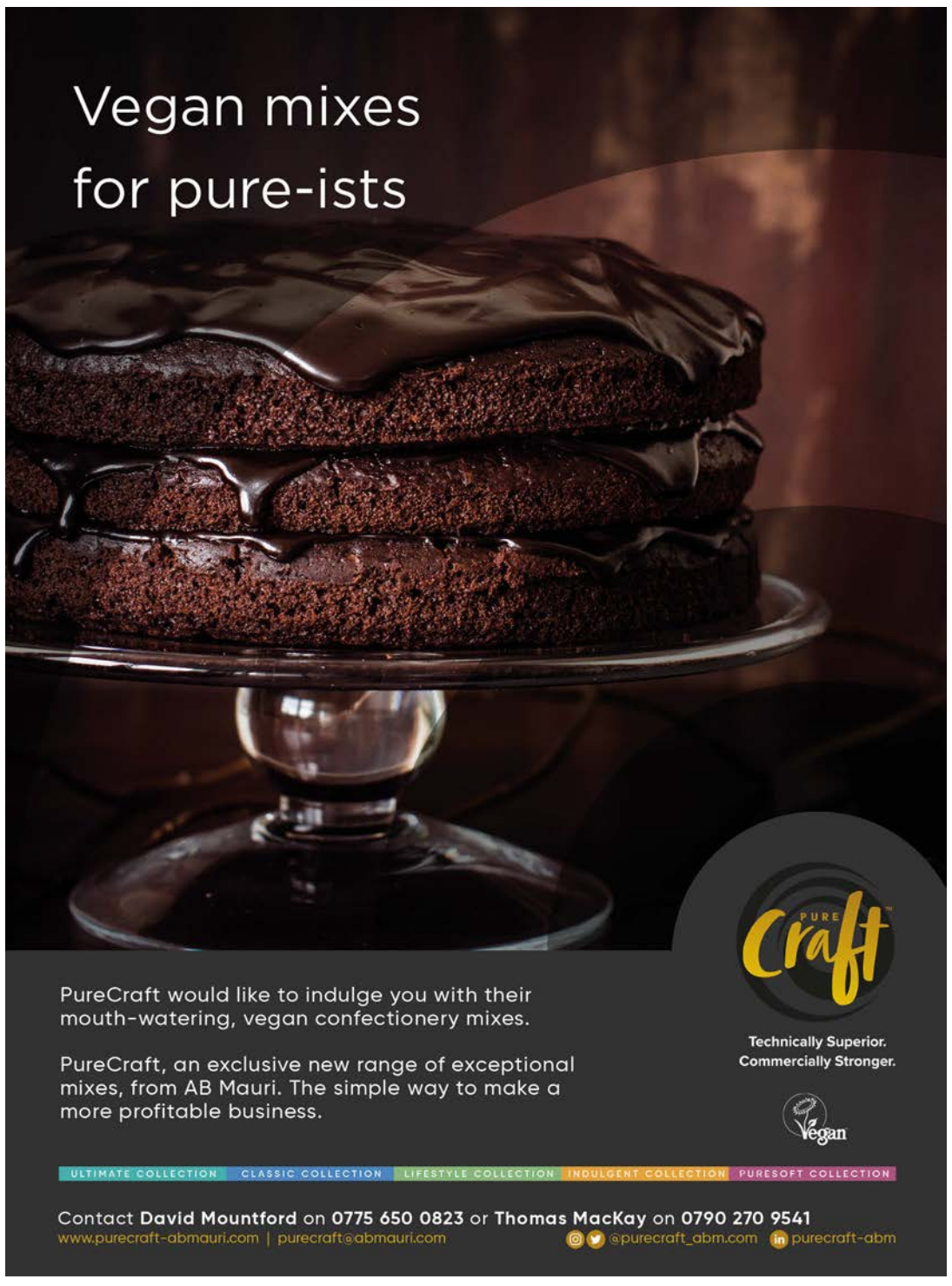
He explained, "One of the key reasons and purpose for moving to a metric system in the first place was to make life easier for people. It would be easier for children to learn and it would be easier to carry out the maths when working out weights and prices.

"100g in a kilogram and 100 kilograms in a metric tonne is far easier to understand than 14 pounds in a stone and however many ounces there are in a pound. Apart from anything else, all our equipment weighs everything in grams and a move back to imperial would require at best a reprogramming of machinery as well as a re-educating of a vast number of people."

Andrew Goodacre, CEO of the British Independent Retail Association (Bira), added, "The immediate reaction to plans to bring back imperial measures is disbelief. It is hard to find indie retailers who would welcome such a move, bearing in mind that there is already a choice to display imperial measurements."



> "The immediate reaction to plans to bring back imperial measures is disbelief"



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POSH PIZZA

The British appetite for pizza has grown more than 2,300% over the last decade (Just Eat). As quality expectations rise, so opportunity knocks for fine food retailers, says Sally-Jayne Wright

Pizza has become aspirational. When in June, *The Times Weekend* published a list of Father's Day gift ideas, suggestions included an £89 Smeg pizza stone and a Gozney dual fuel portable pizza oven at £399.

On packaging, the words 'wood-fired', 'hand-stretched' and 'sourdough' are standard requirements. Once Italian bitter greens were hard to track down outside Italy, but now you'll find friarielli on a Waitrose pizza.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE POSH PIZZA TREND?

- The need to socialise outdoors in lockdown led many foodies – including *Speciality Food* editor, Holly Shackleton – to buy portable pizza ovens
- Intense competition among providers, especially food trucks, led to improved quality
- Growing awareness of the benefits of sourdough helped persuade the health conscious to eat pizza again. Sourdough is considered more digestible than yeast-puffed bases

SHOULD WE INVEST IN A WOOD-FIRED OVEN?

George Dart, manager at The Farm Table restaurant at Darts Farm Shop, Devon, is a fan. They bought a gas-and-wood combi to be on the safe side but found the wood fire easy to run and gas nozzles took up valuable space. George advises: "Get your kitchen layout right. You'll need three full-time people: one for rolling; one for topping and slicing; and one for cooking and finishing. You could train up a keen youngster."

WHAT'S THE BEST KIND OF FLOUR?

At Dart's, they use frozen dough balls made with British flour which they then ferment. If you want to buy British, Shipton Mill of Tetbury sell an Italian-style 00 white flour. The most delicious sourdough pizza we've tasted came from La Pernella pizzeria in London's SW18. Owner, Elena Frattini, told us they use strong Caputo 00 flour – 'the purple one'.

AND WHOSE TOMATOES SHOULD WE USE?

Holly Shackleton reckons it's worth shelling out for Mutti tomatoes. DOC quality standards for Vera Pizza Napolitana specify San Marzano tomatoes grown in volcanic soil.

WE'RE STICKING TO CHILLED PIZZAS FROM OUR DELI COUNTER.

These can be "great business" as Liam Spivey of the Chatsworth Estate Farm Shop, Derbyshire, confirms. They sell 7,000 a year and even had a Christmas dinner pizza featuring turkey, sprouts, cranberry sauce and bacon.

That's nothing. The winner of Top Pizza Takeaway on BBC2's *Britain's Top Takeaways* series had a CTM or Chicken Tikka Masala pizza!

Fun and luxury toppings can be great for publicity. We've come across an Absolutely Crabulous pizza with Northumberland crab meat, a Truffle Shuffle with truffle cream and The Seafood One with samphire, white wine cream sauce and Cornish crab.

WHAT SHOULD WE PUT ON VEGAN PIZZAS? WE'RE NOT KEEN ON FAKE MEATS AND CHEESES.

Our favourite branded pizzas are made by Crosta & Mollica who scooped many stars in the 2021 Great Taste Awards. You could copy their new Vegana pizza and use a tomato and caramelised balsamic onion sauce with grilled mushrooms and a green veg like broccoli. For protein they use a creamy chickpea sauce, with rosemary, sea salt and olive oil. At Darts Farm Shop they've had success with grilled aubergine sauces.

GOT ANY IDEAS FOR GLUTEN-AVOIDERS? WE ALREADY KNOW THE WHITE RABBIT, DR OETKER'S RISTORANTE AND PIZZA EXPRESS BRANDS.

Dou_h at Home's new Gluten Free Pizza Kits (£19.99 for two pizza bases and four toppings) won a gold in this year's Free-From Awards. Invented by the owners of a street food trailer, one of whom is a coeliac, these pizzas wowed the judges who thought the price comparable with a good takeaway and worth the money for the "great flavour and texture". Available from Dou_h and Co.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE TREND

- Promote your pizzas during National Pizza Week (21st-27th November) organised by the Pizza, Pasta and Italian Food Association (PAPA). This year's theme is the World Cup; could you design an appropriate topping?
- Copy Macknade Food Hall, Kent and offer pizza-making workshops during school holidays to increase footfall
- Showcase local produce such as Dorset salume, quality honey and Hampshire Buffalo Mozzarella
- Investigate British-grown basil grown hydroponically
- Avoid food waste. Use wonky vegetables from the farm in your sauces. A surplus of smoked trout after Christmas can be frozen and sold on a trout and mascarpone pizza

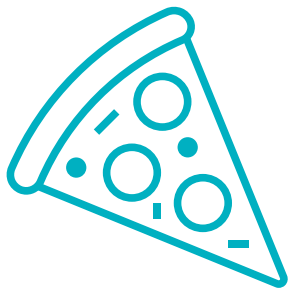
> "A posh pizza with a sublime topping and well-made base has become fine food"

IS THERE A MAXIMUM PEOPLE WILL PAY?

George Dart reckons £22 is about the limit for a fresh pizza but this may soon change – see below. Liam Spivey reports many Chatsworth customers are cutting back – eating out less but treating themselves to special meals at home. So they're introducing a ready-prepared sourdough pizza at £7 – alongside their standard £5 pizza.

WILL THE TREND LAST?

As long as anxiety is on the increase, we'll need comfort food. Pizza made up 19% of all takeaway orders on the Just Eat app in 2020. That said, a spokesman for PAPA told us that wheat prices and availability are major concerns for the pizza industry. Food prices are soaring. A posh pizza with a sublime topping and well-made base has become fine food. Rise to the challenge.



"**PIZZA** MADE UP **19%** OF ALL **TAKEAWAY** ORDERS ON THE **JUST EAT** APP IN **2020**"



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"As a nation, we must consume more of our local produce"

Minister Victoria Prentis, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, explains the value of protected food names



For me, food is a personal and political priority. It has never been higher up the agenda, with recent events serving as a timely reminder of the importance of domestic food production. In June, we published our Food Strategy, which set out the importance of maintaining and boosting our food security. It also set out a new ambition for 50% of government expenditure on food procurement to be on a combination of food produced locally and certified to higher production standards. As a nation, we must consume more of our local produce.

The Food Strategy also reinforced the importance of food and drink manufacturers to communities across the UK. The sector itself is larger than the aerospace and automotive industries combined. With a food manufacturer in every constituency in this country, they provide employment opportunities and apprenticeships, they invest in research and innovation, and they inspire a real sense of pride and identity in local areas. Whether it's the Cornish Pasty, Melton Mowbray Pork Pie, Scotch Whisky or Welsh Lamb, the UK is home to some fantastic produce that contributes millions of pounds to local economies ever year. It is right that we protect their special quality, provenance, and heritage.

Protecting food names isn't a new concept. The geographical indication system of recognising the importance of iconic names to the economy, environment and traditions of places is linked to earlier systems which protected products such as Champagne. Early UK adopters of the system included Stilton Cheese and Welsh Lamb.

Outside the European Union, we have designed UK GI schemes that will continue protections that guarantee a product's characteristics or reputation, authenticity, and origin. We will also be able to recognise new products under our schemes, and I would urge food and drink producers to think carefully about signing up to one of our schemes which protect a diverse range of products including food, agricultural products, beer, cider, wine, and spirit drinks.

Recently, I had the pleasure of speaking at the UK GI conference where I was able to announce that we will be designating Sussex wine as a GI, encompassing sparkling and still wines from Sussex. The move, which has since been designated, will help wine producers in Sussex grow their reputation at home and abroad, at a time when the UK's reputation for high-quality wine is ever-growing. In the South Downs National Park alone, there has been a 90% increase since 2016. Sussex is also home to Plumpton College, where the next generation of UK wine growers are being trained. The designation will be a huge boost to jobs, skills and the local economy.

The first new product to achieve UK GI status became the seventeenth member of the Welsh GI family of products; Gower Salt Marsh Lamb became a UK GI last summer, guaranteeing that it comes from lambs which were born and reared on the North Gower coastline in Wales.

Producers of products designated as UK GIs will benefit from an increased profile that recognitions within the family of UK GIs brings. By sharing a common GI identity with high profile products such as Scotch Whisky, less well-known products such as Vale of Evesham Asparagus can benefit from government promotion campaigns both in the UK and abroad.

Our manifesto was clear that we want people at home and abroad to be lining up to buy British; our Food Strategy set out measures to boost domestic consumption of local produce, and we have announced new agri-food and drink attaches in priority markets around the world to help boost exports. As well as posts in China, USA, India, Canada and Mexico, the agri-food attachés will be covering growth markets in the Gulf, Africa, South America and the Asia-Pacific region. Existing attachés in China and the UAE have been pivotal in securing access for a greater range of products and driving export growth. This includes some of our existing GIs.

Of course, registration also offers producers the opportunity to promote their status to consumers through retailers here in the UK with a UK GI logo serving as an effective marketing tool. Producers also benefit from protection against misuse of their products' names; bringing government and local authority enforcement action that is powerful and cost free to producers.

We know that consumers value authenticity and tradition, which are qualities that GI status guarantees. We want to increase awareness of GIs to ensure that they are more widely understood by consumers, to help them differentiate unique products on supermarket shelves. I also want to continue to work with producers and retailers to better support consumer awareness of our GI offer. We have so many incredible products, and I want the GI status to be used by more and more of our iconic food and drink producers. We can and must celebrate and protect more of our excellent local produce, and ensure it is given the recognition that it deserves.

> "We can and must celebrate and protect more of our excellent local produce, and ensure it is given the recognition that it deserves"





COMMENTATORS



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES



MATT WHELAN
FIELDFARE



ALISSIA FESTA
COTSWOLD FAYRE



MATT LIDGITT
CRIMPLE

PLANNING A FINE FOOD CHRISTMAS

We may still be months away from picking out our Christmas trees, but it is essential that indies get ahead in order to succeed this festive season

We've had a couple of very unusual Christmases, from being plunged into a third national lockdown in December 2020 to finally being reunited with our loved ones last year. Unfortunately, there is a chance that this year's festivities could be affected by the current cost-of-living crisis as the terrible war in Ukraine rages on. But Christmas brings a significant opportunity for fine food retailers, as their ability to make every moment count through engaging storytelling, premium quality and community spirit sets them apart during the festive season.

The cost-of-living crisis

The current situation is making everyone feel anxious, regardless of their financial stability. Nobody can predict how the next few months will go, so indies need to be aware of budgets and provide something for everyone this Christmas.

Liam Spivey, general manager at Chatsworth Estate Farm Shop, explains, "Whilst there was much nervousness throughout the supply chain with regards to how the public might engage with Christmas 2021, the reality was that they embraced it wholeheartedly. This Christmas brings new concerns with regards to the impact of the cost-of-living increases that we are all experiencing, so again there is an element of nervousness."

But Liam believes that despite some apprehension, the current financial crisis won't affect footfall. "I expect seasonal activity to be less affected by the challenges around cost of living, so we're planning for a strong Christmas. Even in the toughest times, customers look for a release from their day-to-day challenges so we'll also plan more experiential activities such as additional product tastings, supplier meet and greet events and evening events. However Christmas turns out, underpinning everything we do will be an unwavering commitment to customer service – we'll continue to offer a personal touch that simply cannot be replicated by the supermarkets."

This is something John Shepherd, managing director of Partridges, also notes. "A lot of customers are looking for more personalised touches from us. We are planning for greater sales of bespoke hampers, more targeted gift ideas and own-label products."

Matt Whelan, managing director at Fieldfare, adds, "This year, as people are starting to feel the pinch of the cost-of-living crisis, we are also more likely to see a shift to smaller, affordable luxuries at the Christmas table as opposed to the big, traditional spread.

"Ultimately, Christmas is still going to be about treats. No matter what else is going on in the market, people will still want to treat themselves so make sure you are stocked up on special treats or 'everyday treats'. This is of course an area where speciality food retailers can really excel. Shoppers visit farm shops, delis and speciality stores, quite often, with the view of leaving with something special."

Trending flavours

For many people, Christmas is all about the food. Huge turkeys with all the trimmings, trays of perfectly crispy roast potatoes, and towers of mince pies.

And when it comes to the Christmas spread, it's all about indulgence. "We have seen a lot more of our current suppliers moving into advent calendars and gifting versions of all-year-round products", Alissia Festa, seasonal buyer at Cotswold Fayre, tells *Speciality Food*. "Our brochure boasts some fantastic alternatives to the traditional chocolate advent calendar such as a flavoured coffee one from Beanies. Brands like Love Corn have introduced a gifting jar and Lucy's have launched a special gift set of their dressings.

"However, the star of the show so far is Esplosivo Chilli Sauce which is storming ahead on pre-orders. The chilli sauce certainly stands out, with fun packaging that provides a unique and affordable gift."

As we head towards Christmas 2022, Matt explains, "Nostalgia and tradition are still very important at Christmas, but people are looking for something special that importantly, is convenient to prepare so that they don't have to spend all day in the kitchen on the big day."



This is particularly significant as dietary requirements become more prevalent. Never before has there been as many flexitarians, vegans or gluten-intolerants to cater for. This means that retailers need to keep on top of trending diets such as plant-based offerings and be flexible. "If we have learnt anything over the last two years, it has to be that flexibility is king", Matt adds.

"For many, Christmas is about entertaining large crowds, potentially with different dietary needs, while for others, Christmas is spent with a few. In both cases, people want to be able to put something special on the table

RETAILER INSIGHT



Chris Lidgitt, food hall manager at Crimple, reveals his top tips for a successful Christmas period in fine food retail

MORE IS MORE

You don't have to be a retail expert to foresee an uplift in turkeys, alcohol and mince pies through December, but in reality, almost all products see a dramatic increase leading up to Christmas – simply put, people buy more of (almost) everything. Our bestsellers last year were local free-range turkeys, pigs in blankets, cranberry sauce, mince pies and lots and lots of chocolate.

GOING PREMIUM

Data and sales show that consumers tend to go more premium in December, buying higher quality produce. Everyone wants to be the host with the most, and so for independent retailers like Crimple, this presents a huge opportunity. Our luxury and local products are the ultimate way to impress guests and the uniqueness of what we source and sell makes us stand out from similar stores.

RETAIL PLANNING

Christmas Day falls on a Sunday this year – which is important for retail planning! With Christmas Eve being a Saturday, this will no doubt be a huge day for grocery buying but also the Thursday and Friday before. It's important in the build-up to work closely with suppliers to make sure we have the freshest products through the busy period.

BUYING BRITISH

Factor in Brexit and the current supply chain issues. Everyone will be buying British this year and the logistics will be pushed to the limit. We need to factor this in early and secure delivery slots as early as august.





> “No matter what else is going on in the market, people will still want to treat themselves so make sure you are stocked up on special treats or ‘everyday treats”

that is easy to prepare yet marks the occasion.”

Getting ahead

As the biggest trading period of the year fast approaches, indies need to get ahead in order to be successful this Christmas.

For John, “Christmas is our most important time of the year. We pre-order well in advance to secure a guaranteed delivery.”

“It will be crucial for retailers to get their orders placed early to ensure availability of stock”, Alissia adds. “As the issues with increased lead times continue, retailers must forecast and place orders much earlier to minimise the risk of late deliveries and ensure demand is met.”

Liam explains, “One aspect that has helped us have a little more confidence these last couple of years has been a change to the mix of products that we stock. We have decreased the number of Christmas-specific packaged lines in favour of products that can be sold beyond the Christmas season, thus reducing the risk of markdowns. Instead, we have continued to increase our offer of Chatsworth branded lines, whilst continuing to focus on our commitment to quality, working with local suppliers and improving our sustainability credentials.”

According to Matt, retailers should champion the freezer this Christmas. “Frozen allows retailers to plan ahead – you don’t need to leave it to the last minute to order and you can be assured that you are all set up and ready”, he explains.

“At the same time, the frozen offering also helps shoppers to manage their budgets and plan ahead as they can stock up well in advance of Christmas. Get shoppers to think ahead by communicating your frozen offering to them.”

While it is impossible to know what will happen in the coming months, fine food retailers can be confident that they are well-placed to respond to the changing landscape with agility and innovation. So let the Christmas planning begin, and here’s to a festive season full of luxurious gifts, tempting treats and classic comforts.

2022 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE **STOCK CHECK**



CHIKA’S SWEET CINNAMON ALMONDS

Chika’s new Sweet Almonds offer all the flavour and indulgence of a seasonal Christmas treat and are packed full of goodness too, available in Irish Cream and Sweet Cinnamon varieties.

chikas.co.uk



FOREST FEAST VALENCIA ORANGE DARK CHOCOLATE HAZELNUTS

Oven-roasted whole hazelnuts smothered in rich Belgian dark chocolate and a burst of zesty Valencia orange – the perfect gift for any occasion.

forestfeast.com



THE BAY TREE CHRISTMASSY PICKLE

This harmony of classic cranberry and fruity pickle will liven up all your Christmas fare from cheese and pate, to pies, rolls and platters.

thebaytree.co.uk



SNOWDONIA BOUNCING BERRY CHEESE

A mature white Cheddar balanced to perfection with cranberries – deliciously sweet and moreishly creamy.

snowdoniacheese.co.uk



FLOWER & WHITE SALTED CARAMEL DOUBLE DIPPED PRETZELS

These indulgent double-dipped pretzels will tempt any customer with a sweet tooth, and make the perfect accompaniment to hot chocolate.

flowerandwhite.co.uk



ROSS & ROSS HOMEMADE CURING KIT FOR HAM

This eco-friendly curing kit has been specifically designed for Christmas and includes a Christmas curing mix, a Roast Ham Glaze and an easy-to-follow instructions booklet.

rossandrossgifts.co.uk



DIAL UP THE FLAVOUR

Condiments may have been a mainstay of deli shelves for decades, but a new generation of innovative options are shaking up the category – much to shoppers' delight



COMMENTATORS



LAURA ROBERTS
LAURA'S LARDER



MARIA WHITEHEAD



NICK MINCHIN
SANTA MARIA



RICK SHEEPSHANKS
STOKES

The condiments category has experienced a shake-up in recent times, largely influenced by the sizeable powers at play elsewhere in the industry and beyond. Covid certainly made an impact; consumers' inability to travel led to them seeking out international flavours from within their storecupboard, while financial concerns and a desire to experiment – to do more with less – has led many to be more creative than ever when it comes to how and when condiments come into play with cooking.

Far from being simple flavour-boosters to have on-hand for barbecues and sandwiches, your condiments section deserves to be recognised as a veritable treasure trove of flavour. Maria Whitehead, director of Hawkshead Relish, agrees. "They sit in our cupboards and in the fridge waiting for that piece of cheese or meat platter and before you know it they are out of date and binned, but actually, we need to think differently about these little jars of flavour, see what they contain and get creative in using them in our everyday cooking to add that layer of flavour. All of a sudden that tomato chutney is a great pasta sauce when added with some olives, capers, a splash of wine and a little fresh basil; or layer a great pickle in your homemade sausage roll for a picnic that already has the condiment in it ready to eat. It's all about experimenting, having fun and making sure that you use the products in your cupboard and fridge." Indeed, the Hawkshead Relish team created a book around the concept, Embellish with Relish, which contains a host of recipes with condiments at their heart.

Consumer experimentation is the name of the game at Tracklements too, as marketing director Becky Vale explains. "Tracklements are the secret weapons of the larder, transforming simple into sumptuous and adding a swell of intense flavour to everything they accompany," she says. "Our inventiveness in making them is matched only by consumers' enthusiasm for using them: We've seen Sticky Fig Relish used as a topper for porridge, Fresh Chilli Jam enjoyed in donuts, mustard transform eggy bread! Because they're extraordinarily versatile, there are as many uses for Tracklements as there are meals in the world. We strongly believe that life is a little less colourful without a perfectly balanced Tracklement."

While the culinary opportunities that condiments provide are limitless, that's not to say that their classic uses should be stepped over in place of innovative new formats. Mustards, horseradish and other traditional sauces are well worth shelf space in your store, and producers are ramping up the flavour to make sure that both adventurous and traditional cooks will be delighted. "Stokes Classic English Mustard has a subtle twist to replace the usual punishing burn with a sauce that complements rather than competes with beef," begins Rick Sheepshanks, founder of Stokes Sauces. "Now, Stokes Cider & Horseradish Mustard is a twist on twists. Take wholegrain mustard bursting with intense yellow and black mustard seed textures and flavours, and balance that intensity with British dry cider and a gently lingering English horseradish finish. To dampen the fire in a 'creamy' horseradish sauce, add single cream and fine English horseradish. Is this a twist of simply good practice?" The brand's apple sauce also boasts a flavour-filled twist – British dry cider to lift the classic combination of rich and sweetened thick cut apples - while they let fish and lamb "own the plate", with whole eggs from British free-range hens and sweet garden mint in their tartare sauce and mint sauce allowing quality produce to shine.

Atkins & Potts is also a passionate advocate of doing things right. "We make classic recipes using British key ingredients such as free-range egg, butter and mint," begins Nicola Potts, director, "and use generous quantities of the key ingredients, not just token amounts. Our aim is to make our sauces as close to homemade as possible." The business is also conscientious when it comes to its environmentail responsibilities. "Our respect for food, people and the environment is at the centre of everything we do. Our goal is to make products which mean we walk more lightly on this planet. Later this year we move to new production kitchens which will be solar powdered and include other energy efficiency, waste reduction and recycling initiatives. This will be part of an ongoing programme to reduce our CO2 impact."

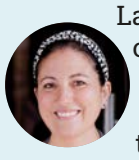
Experiment with worldwide flavours

Ease and versatility is the name of the game when it comes to condiments, whatever their culinary origin, and every meal and snack offers an occasion to experiment. "Breakfast is booming," begins Nick Minchin, marketing manager UK & Ireland at Santa Maria, "and it's easier than you might think to raise your customers' meal occasions to another level. Spices, sauces and condiments can be used to create a variety of flavours for any meal occasion. Added to butter, they make a flavoursome spice and herb butter, mixed with oil they create bespoke dressings and toppings, or to give dishes extra oomph, try drizzling with a glaze to give a traditional dish an instant flavourful facelift." According to Nick, Mexican cuisine is the number one flavour trend shaking up the condiment category. "15 million more Mexican lunchtime meals were consumed in the last six months of lockdown according to Onepoll," says Nick. "Condiments and sauces are a key part of authentic Mexican cuisine, with salsa and guacamole synonymous with the region's dishes."

It's not only Mexican dishes

> "Condiments complement every part of the shop; the chutney for the cheese, the spread for the bread, the va-va-voom in the sandwich, the sauce that makes the BBQ go off with a bang"

RETAILER INSIGHT



Laura Roberts, owner of Laura's Larder, talks Speciality Food through the value of condiments to her business

Condiments are really our life blood! They bring things alive! They complement every part of the shop; the chutney for the cheese, the spread for the bread, the va-va-voom in the sandwich, the sauce that makes the BBQ go off with a bang. As we have a full cheese counter I would say that cheese accompaniments are the biggest seller. We use Hawkshead Relish Onion Marmalade in our sandwiches and therefore we sell quite a bit of it, I'm also a big fan of their Cheeseboard Chutney. We also sell a lot of Olive Branch's Sweet Olive, Fig and Almond Relish as it's really delish with soft cheeses. We love to support smaller producers too and sell JR's Kitchen Chutney which is a local maker and Eastgate Larder's Medlar Jelly and Chutney as two examples. Sauce wise we sell a lot of Sauce Shop products and we really love them, the Chipotle Mayo is a winner and used in the sandwich menu at the shop which means people get to try it and want to own it at home.

HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY TRENDS OR EVOLUTION IN THE CONDIMENT SECTOR IN RECENT TIMES?

There's a big push on vegan and plant based products replacement products, e.g. mayonnaise, which is of course across the board, and some are really great. A Little Bit Lemon & Herb Mayo is a popular one and we also use it in our sandwiches. Gut health is also really important. We sell a huge amount of Kimchi, the Bottlebrush Red One particularly, it's really delicious and also used in our menu. Leading on from that are also zero waste products like Pain in the Butt Hot Sauce from the Urban Fermentery which takes kimchi waste, adds flavour and creates a delicious hot sauce! The big push at the moment seems to be reduced or zero sugar. Something we're looking harder at, we are all learning together here.

Spice always seem to sell well in the shop. We have recently started stocking Payst Sauces, the burnt chilli is really good, as are their curry pastes. Chilli jam in all its forms as a cheese accompaniment doesn't seem to be going anywhere anytime soon, and rightly so.

HOW DO YOU UPSELL CONDIMENTS IN YOUR SHOP?

This is really about understanding the customer and paying attention to what they are buying! Being small does make it easier for us to really know what customers like, what they can and can't eat, and knowing if they will like something that goes with their basket. I have a weird memory for people's likes and dislikes where foods are concerned (but don't quiz me on the names or ages of people's children!)



which are setting foodies' tables alight in 2022. UK consumers are excited by chilli heat and hot sauces, as well as trending flavours which incorporate a bit of capsicum buzz such as Korean cuisine – with sticky Korean sauce-drizzled hot wings a particular favourite. Of course, Indian condiments have been a favourite for generations, with authentic and traditional options a mainstay of British cupboards – and exciting new-to-Brits options being released into the market.

During the pandemic, food and drink offered the opportunity for shoppers to travel from their kitchens, and Tracklements relishes the chance to provide customers with delicious culinary exploration. "Tracklements, and most especially the three special editions we launch each year, tap into consumers' desire for food exploration, whether that's exotic flavours from around the globe or homegrown combinations to fire up the tastebuds," says Tracklements' Becky. "They allow you to taste the world from your kitchen, experiment and add your own flair and colour to a meal." However exciting the international flavours offered by a product, consumers are not willing to sacrifice quality, though. "However exotic the flavour, consumers are still looking for a brand they can believe in," explains Becky.

> "We need to think differently about these little jars of flavour, see what they contain and get creative in using them in our everyday cooking to add that layer of flavour"

The gift of the upsell

Thanks to the variety of flavours and functions available, condiments can be positioned anywhere within the store – display them alongside corresponding product ranges rather than in a standalone section; for example, traditional Sunday roast condiments such as mint sauce and redcurrant jelly next the butchery counter. Sharing serving suggestions and inspiration around making the most of condiments – so they don't end up forgotten at the back of the fridge – is also a good way to go to make your sales sing.



SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE · 2022 · STOCK CHECK



HUNTER & GATHER EGG-FREE MAYO

Creamy and free-from egg, added sugar, soy, milk, seed oils, and all top 14 allergens.

hunterandgatherfoods.com



A LITTLE BIT SPICY SALSA DIP

Perfect for sharing, as a dip for crisps and crudités, or drizzled over roasted vegetables.

alittlebit.co.uk



STOKES SAUCES MINT SAUCE

A classic mint sauce made with mint, white wine vinegar and unrefined raw cane sugar.

stokessauces.co.uk



TRACKLEMENTS CORIANDER & CHILLI CHUTNEY

Fresh, vibrant and fragrant, this traditional Indian chutney is bursting with hot spices, green chillies and aromatic coriander.

tracklements.co.uk



ROOTS & WINGS ORGANIC REDCURRANT SAUCE WITH PORT

Deeply rich redcurrant sauce bursting with fruit and flavour – made with Fonseca Port and two varieties of whole redcurrants.

rootsandwingsorganic.com



MATTHEW'S PRESERVED PLUM SAUCE

This versatile sauce can be used in stir fries and your morning fry up.

matthewspreserved.co.uk



PARVA SPICES SAMBAL HIJAU

An intoxicating blend of mint, coriander and green serrano chillies traditionally used as a condiment but boasting many other culinary uses.

parva-spices.co.uk



PICO SAUCES PUNJABI KETCHUP

Everything you want from an aromatic, rich plate of butter chicken, but now you can enjoy it in the convenient form of an easy-to-use ketchup.

picosauces.com



OLIVES ET AL NORTH AFRICAN STYLE RED CHILLI HARISSA SAUCE

Hot and spicy sauce – ideal with couscous and tagines, or stirred into mayonnaise for a warm dip.

olivesetal.co.uk



DR. TROUBLE SAUCE LEMON CHILLI SAUCE

A strong, clean lemon flavour with notes of ginger, mango masala and a touch of garlic.

drtroublesauce.co.uk

COMMENTATORS



ANNABEL MAKIN-JONES
ANNABEL'S DELICIOUSLY BRITISH



HALIMA MARKEY
SKOULIKAS



JEFF HIGGINS
THE WOODEN SPOON



PANOS MANUELIDES
ODYSEA



SPREADING SUCCESS

Today's shopper isn't willing to compromise, so options which offer health credentials, provenance and great flavour are surefire hits in 2022

You can't go wrong with a slice of toast smothered with jam at breakfast-time, or even as a cheeky mid-afternoon snack. But today's consumers are using conserves and other sweet spreads in more inventive ways than ever before. From baking to pimping up porridge, the era of innovative spread usage is here.

As well as being more open-minded when it comes to the uses of the jarred jams, honeys and spreads they have stored in their cupboards year-round, the adaption to hybrid working, scratch cooking and interest in health has created new occasions to enjoy even the simplest of products.

The provenance opportunity

According to Halima Markey, business development manager at Skoulikas, "These days, consumers are looking for new and exciting ways to enjoy top quality spreads and snacks, at a reasonable price. As a consequence, we have worked very hard to produce palm oil-free spreads, as this is of particular concern to many, and thus our Sunita Sesame and Nut butters are without palm oil. "

For Annabel Makin-Jones, founder of Annabel's Deliciously British, when it comes to consumers, "It's not 'what are they looking for?' but 'what should they be looking for'". She explains, "For example, they should be looking at the British-grown fruit used in jams and conserves and the percentage of fruit used. In terms of honey, anything that states 'blended' is watered down, and uses bees in mass production that are trapped inside, only fed on sugar syrup. That must be avoided at all costs.

"Consumers want to feel attached to what they are buying, knowing the face behind the name and the nostalgia that goes with it."

Strong provenance is something that Panos Manuelides, founder of Greek and Mediterranean fine food producer Odysea, also stresses the importance of when it comes to sweet spreads. "We've seen an increase in demand for honey products with unique and interesting provenance, flavour profiles and health benefits", he explains.

"Alexandros Gousiaris, Odysea's honey producer, harvests the honey at the end of July from hives placed in vast ancient Oak forests at the foot of Mount Olympus. We've found that consumers really connect with an interesting provenance story."

But Annabel suggests going even further, as she stresses that it is important for fine food retailers to look into the provenance of a brand and ask more questions than what is on the label. "Food labelling is incredibly poor and allows a lot of false advertising so always read the back of the pack", she explains.

"I have seen British flags on the front and back of the pack, even though it says not produced but packed in the UK – it is a complete deception and we need to educate the consumer about the provenance of produce."

With supermarket shelves stacked high with poor quality, cheap and blended honeys, Panos describes, "We've found there's a growing awareness amongst consumers as to the benefits of buying honey from smaller producers.

"The importance of checking labels is widespread, and consumers now realise that honey labelled 'blend of EU and non-EU honey' doesn't offer the flavour or nutritional value traditionally associated with honey, and are increasingly prepared to pay a premium for unprocessed honey from genuine producers."

> "Moving away from typical brands, and providing a variety of high-quality, well-sourced and interesting products with an engaging backstory is an unrivalled way to excite customers"



Focus on health

As nutrition becomes a focal point for consumers in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, healthier spreads such as manuka honey and pure nut butters are gaining popularity.

Currently, the number of consumers looking for products with no additives or artificial preservatives is increasing. Demand for products with 'clean' labelling is on the rise, with customers becoming more inclined to pay a premium price for products with this specific label.

Halima explains, "The health advantages of nut butters have become increasingly prevalent in recent years. As a consequence, the market and consumption of these products have grown, due to a wider appreciation of their benefits.

"In addition to this, consumers have become ever-more conscious of their own health, with ever-improving lifestyles to match. Nut butters are a nourishing and satisfying food to include in a balanced diet – they provide healthy (unsaturated) fat, protein, fibre and a variety of vitamins and minerals including vitamin B, vitamin E, zinc and iron."

Consumers are also increasingly using jam, honey and spreads in their cooking and baking – no longer are they simply toppings for toast. According to Panos, "Honey is an extremely versatile product that's been used in cooking, for both sweet and savoury recipes for centuries.

"It's fantastic when used in a marinade, dressing as well as adding natural and complex sweetness to baked dishes."

For Jeff Higgins, owner of The Wooden Spoon Preserving Company, "Jams get a level of unfair press when it comes to health. Reducing sugar levels will lessen the preserving aspect, and not necessarily lead to better flavour.

"A traditional morning intake will quickly metabolise and it continues to play a part in a balanced diet, though admittedly a dollop in the afternoon along with cream and scones needs to be measured!

"No-added sugar spreads cannot be called jams which is unfortunate, as the name alone puts off as many people as it attracts; these contain fruit and fruit concentrates, so are effectively 100% fruit albeit still contain up to 50% carbohydrates.

"However, the great thing with these is that they don't need to cook for as long so the result is a true fruit flavour. We launched our No Monsters in Me range of spreads this year, aimed at the family market with names such as The Phantom Fruit Picker's Blackcurrant Slime, and we're starting to get traction!"

> "The health advantages of nut butters have become increasingly prevalent in recent years"



THE UK **NUT** AND **SEED SPREAD** MARKET IS **WORTH** OVER **£140M**, WITH **GROWTH** OF **10%** BETWEEN **2015-2020**

SOURCE: EUROMONITOR

Successful stocking

Indie retailers need to make sure they are both catering to demand from their customers, and following the general trends within the sector for sweet success.

According to Halima, "The current booming business transformation in the grocery sector of food retail is moving at a faster pace than has been evident for many years. One cannot understate the importance of forecasting, though the need for long shelf-life products to fill the stockrooms does not necessarily have to match consumer demand, which enables greater control of stock-flow through the supply chain. In this way, retailers could theoretically stock up on more popular lines."

Jeff supports this idea, adding, "Successful independent retailers not only need to keep abreast of customer demand and trends but also need to ensure constant availability of stock, bestselling lines in particular. Good delivery service is paramount, along with timely ordering. We strive to provide a flexible service to suit all of our customers."

As Panos concludes, "Moving away from typical brands, and providing a variety of high-quality, well-sourced and interesting products with an engaging backstory is an unrivalled way to excite customers."

Above all else, indie customers are looking for a point of difference from what they find in the multiples. Thus, good quality products with marks of distinction such as local sourcing, premium quality of ingredients, the promise of flavour, uniqueness and provenance are paramount to getting jams, honey and spreads right in 2022.

STOCK CHECK



ANNABEL'S DELICIOUSLY BRITISH RHUBERRY JAM

Made with wonky Yorkshire Malling Centenary strawberries and Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb picked in their absolute prime, this jam is deliciously sweet with a slightly tart edge.

annabelsdeliciouslybritish.co.uk



KNOTTY'S CRUNCHY PEANUT BUTTER

Scrumptious peanut butter at its simplest – expertly roasted peanuts both smoothly and crunchily blended with a pinch of sea salt. Absolutely nothing else!

knottys.co.uk



SUNITA 4 NUT BUTTER

A creamy blend of roasted peanuts, almonds, cashews and hazelnuts, this premium spread is a great alternative to standard peanut butter.

sunitafoods.co.uk



BLACK BEE BRITISH SUMMER HONEY

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blackbeehoney.com



ODYSEA GREEK ORANGE BLOSSOM RAW HONEY

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odysea.com



THE WOODEN SPOON RASPBERRY AND CHERRY JAM

Made from Morello cherries and raspberries which both provide tartness, this jam has a real 'zing' to it.

thewoodenspoon.co.uk



TIPTREE WILD BLUEBERRY JAM

A rich dark conserve with a delicious taste, made using wild blueberries for a deeper and more aromatic flavour than cultivated versions of the fruit.

tiptree.com



ROGUE STRAWBERRY & TONKA BEAN JAM

Tonka bean, described as the love child of vanilla caramel and dark honey, is perfectly paired with juicy strawberries in this jam.

enjoyrogue.com



MEET THE PRODUCER

Since its inception in 1885, Wilkin & Sons has delighted food lovers – and this quintessentially British brand is primed to cater for modern consumer tastes

Travel to any farflung location via a quality airline, visit a discerning food retailer or hotel's afternoon tea or breakfast selection, and you'll likely be presented with Wilkin & Sons' internationally-revered selection of condiments and preserves. Now to be found in over 60 countries, its worldwide recognition and unwavering popularity belie the fact that Wilkin & Sons has been producing its much-loved products in the same small Essex village since 1885 and that honest, homespun family values lie at the heart of its mission.

Having farmed at the Essex village of Tiptree since 1757, the Wilkin family has grown a wide range of traditional English fruits for generations; current fruit crops include strawberries, raspberries, mulberries, Morello cherries, rhubarb, damsons, Victoria plums, greengages, quinces and medlars. "Our signature fruit, the flavour-filled Little Scarlet strawberry – a tiny wild variety which is challenging to grow and harvest, so we believe that Tiptree farm is the only location in the world growing it as a crop – has delighted strawberry jam lovers for generations," begins Liz Baker, marketing manager. Fruit which cannot be farmed on-site is always sourced from trusted growers; for example, Wilkin & Sons source the oranges for their orange marmalade from Seville, the home of the perfectly bittersweet fruit.

It was only a matter of time before these high quality and quintessentially British fruits became the basis of an ever-growing selection of high quality conserves, condiments and other delectable treats. "Made to cherished recipes and free from artificial colours and flavours, the preserves are cooked in small batches using traditional copper-bottomed



pans," explains Liz, and over time the Wilkin & Sons range has grown to incorporate not just excellent conserves and marmalades, but also English fruit juices and fruit gin liqueurs, honeys, indulgent sweet spreads, sauces, condiments, fresh fruit, teas, cakes, biscuits, fruit juices, gift packs, Christmas puddings and even natural wax candles and fragrant rattan reed diffusers for the home – "all created in partnership with like-minded local businesses".

The home of quality indulgence

With foodies across the UK hungry for delicious treats, Wilkin & Sons' nut-free and palm oil-free Chocolate Spread, Salted Caramel Spread, Chocolate Orange Spread and Banoffee Spread – made using double cream, Belgian dark chocolate and sea salt from local (and also world-famous) supplier Maldon – are proving particularly popular. "They're terrific on toast, wonderful on waffles, and delicious drizzled over ice cream," says Liz, "and if you're feeling naughty, you might spoon them straight from the jar!" Particularly popular is the Salted Caramel Spread made with Maldon sea salt; its deeply rich caramel notes are particularly delicious when gently warmed and drizzled over ice cream, you might add some to the rim of a martini glass when making a Salted Caramel Martini with Tiptree's Salted Caramel Vodka Liqueur.

As one of the most instantly recognisable food exports Britain can boast – wherever you are in the world, spot a jar of Tiptree jam and you'll be instantly transported home – it's no wonder that food-loving consumers across continents adore Wilkin & Sons produce, but its fanbase also extends to the royal family itself. The business's first Royal Warrant was granted by George V in 1911 and it has remained suppliers to royals since then, with the current Royal Warrant granted by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.



Investing in the future

The history of Wilkin & Sons has from its very beginning been centred around family; the Wilkin family itself, and indeed generations of local families have benefited from this focus. The Tiptree factory employs multiple generations of a number of families across its site, with older generations often sharing a staff room with children before passing the baton on to grandchildren and beyond. This desire to offer stability to its staff is also represented in its Employee Benefit Trust, a set-up which gives each member of its team a keen interest in the future – and success – of the business. This forward-looking stewardship approach to running the business can also be seen in its LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) Marque accreditation, which demonstrates that the business has long worked sympathetically with its local environment and community and continues to do so.

"Here at Wilkin & Sons, looking after our environment has always been one of our core principles," says Liz. "We have an extensive waste management programme on-site, helping us to recycle over 89% of our waste, and we have recently invested in a programme of energy efficiency projects." The team is always looking





to improve, and a recent eco-friendly development has been the introduction of drip feeding systems for their crops – reducing their water usage by 80%, a vital move as water becomes an increasingly scarce resource in the local area. Tiptree's very latest investment, the Tiptree New Growing System, "captures almost all the rain that falls on the crop, allowing us to recover over 90% of the water used in the growing process, and we also clean waste water from the jam factory and use it for irrigation," explains Liz.

Having earned an international reputation for quality, environmental stewardship and fantastic taste for centuries, the future looks bright for Wilkin & Sons as it welcomes the new era of consumer demand.

> "Now to be found in over 60 countries, its worldwide recognition and unwavering popularity belie the fact that Wilkin & Sons has been producing its much-loved products in the same small Essex town since 1885"



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Discover your perfect pairings with these premium cheeseboard picks

1 SHEPHERDS PURSE
HARROGATE BLUE



Harrogate Blue has impressed on the world stage since it's launch in 2012. Judged in the top 16 at the 2018 World Cheese Awards, it was described as "beautiful, creamy, buttery and full bodied. Exceptional and moist, a perfect cheese," by judge Victoria Urresti.
shepherdspurse.co.uk

2 FROMAGERIE RENARD GILLARD
DUO ROYALE



For more than 135 years, Fromagerie Renard Gillard has put all its know-how into the production of exceptional cheeses. This unique Duo Royale Brie is lovingly made from raw cow's milk and filled with decadent truffle cream in the middle. As an original cheese, it offers variety to any luxury cheese board.
sodiaal.coop

3 SNOWDONIA CHEESE COMPANY
FIG & APPLE CHUTNEY



A sweet and fruity chutney with a lovely richness from the figs and silky chunks of Bramley apples. The chutney pairs well with Snowdonia's Truffle Trove, Black Bomber or a soft Continental cheese.
snowdoniacheese.co.uk

4 SNOWDONIA CHEESE COMPANY
ROCK STAR



Rock Star, Snowdonia Cheese Company's first ever vintage cave-aged Cheddar, has been matured to perfection within Welsh slate caverns in the heart of Snowdonia. The result is irresistibly creamy with a distinctively rich and complex flavour.
snowdoniacheese.co.uk

5 LE GRUYÈRE AOP



A popular cheese from the western cantons of Switzerland, the award-winning Gruyère AOP is revered for its unique and delicious flavour. Made with raw milk sourced from a small cluster of dairy farmers in the region, which is transformed by master cheesemakers using customs shared throughout the generations.
gruyere.com/en

6 PETER'S YARD CRISPBREAD SELECTION BOX



A selection of sourdough crispbreads created to complement a well-balanced cheeseboard. Made from simple, natural ingredients including organic flour and milk, they are then baked until perfectly crisp. The three varieties include Spelt & Poppy Seed, Charcoal & Rye and Original.
petersyard.com

7 BALLANCOURT PREMIUM PATÉS



Ballancourt specialises in quality French foods. The extensive range of ambient pâtés, terrines and rillettes is second to none with a variety of jar sizes to suit all needs. They are a perfect addition to any cheese board spread and have the added benefit of long shelf life.
ballancourt.co.uk

8 DANIEL'S SELECTION PREMIUM CHEESE CUMIN



This Premium Cheese Cumin uses raw cow's milk and is matured for a period of eight weeks in order to develop a rich flavour. The addition of cumin seeds gives this cheese a unique taste experience to spice up any cheese board. Now available to order at Rowcliffe.
danielsselection.com

"Opportunities? 2022"



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

With food prices at an all-time high and inflation passing 9% we are all facing challenging times. How can we survive this imminent recession? What can we do in o
ur independent food businesses to keep sales coming in? One thing that helps is that we all have a pretty good idea of how this could affect us.

That is why we need to build damage limitation in to our operations and become innovative with fresh ideas. These ideas may take us out of our comfort zones, but if it helps to keep a roof over our heads and protect our workforce then that's surely a
good thing?

Since heading in to the storm, No2 has been monitoring farmers markets and has seen a serious drop-off in sales. This is not isolated and all other market traders have felt the dip.

Consumer habits are changing and we need to run with that. There are plenty of statistics to find and help you make informed decisions when it comes to produce and market trends.

No2 has a shop and runs several markets selling cheese, occasionally wine and charcuterie. Markets have been an area of serious growth for our business over the last two to three years. This year see us double our presence in the marketplace.

Markets are a good area to help increase revenue streams. The only cost is for your produce being sold, gazebo, fuel and a small pitch fee. If you find a suitable town where you can sell cheese do make sure you research the place first. There are plenty of market towns that financially do not stack up. The best markets are at the weekends or in high net worth areas with good local footfall.

Focus your cheese on specialist and territorials. Health foods continue to be a growth sales area across the UK whilst full fat is being swapped out for skimmed etc. Now is the time to consider your offering – is it ahead of the game? Are you carrying produce that takes too long to shift?

If so, lose the product and consider other items to replace it that move quickly.

Contact local groups, for example, "The U3A" University of the 3rd Age. Talks on cheese and wine are thoroughly enjoyed. These tastings can bring in welcome revenue that are also moral boosters for your team.

We are in cheese because we love it – having an audience that wants to learn more is always a great feeling. Onward sales as a result of these meetings are positive. Going to another venue or house is another shop window for you and it will help direct customers to your business.

Have a look at your shop front – is it dynamic, does it talk to your audience, importantly does it bring them in to buy something? Go bold make positive statements about your produce for all to see. The UK is going on a nose dive and it will be a long time until we can change to an upward trajectory.

Your positivity will be a major ingredient in keeping your business afloat and your team will pick up on any negativity. So as owners we have the toughest job by being at the coal face.

Our dear cheese farmers need us right now to promote and help educate the audience. Public perception of food is changing and guess what it is in favour of real cheese and provenance. British Cheese consumption is at an all-time high and we need to keep that momentum.

My tip is to champion proper artisan British territorials. Put out some produce at a reduced price that people love – cover your costs but get a loss leader on show. This will show your community spirit and that as a local shopkeeper or cheesemonger you are prepared to go that extra mile.

> "We need to build damage limitation in to our operations and become innovative with fresh ideas. These ideas may take us out of our comfort zones, but if it helps to keep a roof over our heads and protect our workforce then that's surely a good thing?"

Long Clawson takes the crown at ICDA 2022

The cheese industry descended on Bingley Hall at Staffordshire County Showground on the 30th of June for the return of the International Cheese & Dairy Awards (ICDA) 2022

The event, which was held for the second time at its new venue in Staffordshire, saw the title of Supreme Champion of Cheese awarded to English cheesemakers Long Clawson for their Shropshire Blue.

SUPREME CHEESE CHAMPION

Long Clawson Dairy was awarded the overall crown after being winning a series of gold and silver medals across the categories.

Bill Mathieson, managing director of Long Clawson Dairy, told *Speciality Food*, "At the celebratory 125 years of the International Cheese and Dairy Awards, we were proud to have entered nine classes in total. In each of these nine classes, we won either gold or silver (or both!).

"We won a silver medal for Rutland Red, our traditionally made Red Leicester – cloth bound, buttered and matured for at least six months. We won a gold award for our White Stilton, which is a crumbly British white cheese, and is very different in flavour to its Blue counterpart.

"We then entered into three Blue Stilton categories where we were awarded gold in each of these, and we also won in the category for our Shropshire Blue. All of the producers that had then won gold went into the finals to determine who would win UK Champion.

"At this point, our Long Clawson Dairy Shropshire Blue was judged to be the UK Champion. This was then put head-to-head against the Overseas Champion and the judges had to make a call between which was the best cheese – and to our excitement, our Shropshire Blue was voted top overall out of 4000+ entries into the awards.

"We're delighted that our small farming cooperative, where the craft and care of our master cheesemakers is so important to us, was recognised through our delicious Shropshire Blue entry. We're still in high spirits after our win and are busy making space in our awards cabinet for the Supreme Champion Trophy!"

Coming in second place as the reserve for the Supreme Cheese Champion was Freisland Campina, after winning Overseas Champion.

> "We're delighted that our small farming cooperative, where the craft and care of our master cheesemakers is so important to us, was recognised through our delicious Shropshire Blue entry"

WINNERS



The main categories saw wins from across the globe including the UK, New Zealand and France

SUPREME CHAMPION DAIRY PRODUCT
Fonterra

THE CHAMPION UK
Long Clawson Dairy – Shropshire Blue

THE RESERVE CHAMPION UK
Belton Farm – Coloured Cheshire

THE CHAMPION OVERSEAS
Freisland Campina – Arina Matured

THE RESERVE CHAMPION OVERSEAS
Onetik – Tomme Brebis Chèvre

CHEESE BOARD AWARDS
Easy Bean





Winter Tarn Dairy launches cheese club

After the successful launch of their online shop earlier this year, Winter Tarn Dairy, based in the Lake District and Manchester, have created a cheese club.

Each box features four carefully selected handmade artisan cheeses sourced from over 37 small independent makers across the British Isles.

Cheeses include Auld Reekie made by Alex Reid in Royal Deeside, Scotland; Buffalo Blue made by Judy Bell and her two daughters Katie and Caroline at their farm near Thirsk, North Yorkshire; Cornish Yarg made by Catherine Mead at Mead at Lynher Dairies near Bodmin, Cornwall; Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Farmhouse, made by Graham Kirkham, at Beesleys Farm, Goosnargh, Lancashire; and Wookey Hole Cave Aged Cheddar, made by Ford Farm Cheesemakers on the Ashley Chase Estate, Dorset.

The subscription is priced at £30 per month, and also contains a box of artisan-crafted biscuits or crackers, and tasting notes for each cheese.

Yorkshire cheese forced to change name a third time after complaints from Greek dairy industry

Shepherds Purse, based near Thirsk, have had to rename their Feta-style cheese for the third time, unveiling its new incarnation, Mrs Bell's Salad Cheese, at the Great Yorkshire Show

The cheese was developed by the former chief cheese steward, Judy Bell MBE, who set out on a mission to create quality dairy alternatives for cow's milk allergy sufferers. Known at the time as Yorkshire Feta, it was Judy's very first cheese, launched in 1989 and going on to win international awards.

Following Judy's death in March this year, her daughter Caroline Bell has stepped into the role as chief cheese steward. Explaining the latest name change for Judy's original cheese, Caroline said, "Feta was awarded a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) by the European Commission in 2002, a decision which was unsuccessfully challenged by Denmark and Germany, and in 2008 we were forced to rename the cheese Yorkshire Fettle."

However, Fettle's success was brought to the attention of the Association of Greek Producers, SEVGAP, who believed that the use of Fettle breached the protection afforded to Feta and demanded that Shepherds Purse cease using it.

Speaking before the cheese was unveiled, Caroline explained, "Obviously we disagree with SEVGAP's position but we do not have the resources to take on the Greek dairy industry and will, once again, rename our famous product. The new name reflects its place in our hearts as part of mum's legacy as it was the very first cheese she created back in the 1980s.

"It seemed fitting that we should unveil the new name at the Great Yorkshire Show where our family has been hugely involved in developing the cheese section for many years."



NEWS IN BRIEF

CHEESES OF MUSWELL HILL RELEASES SECOND BOOK

Morgan McGlynn, owner of Cheeses of Muswell Hill and resident cheese expert on Channel 4's Sunday Brunch has written a second book. *The Modern Cheeseboard* is a useful guide for putting together the perfect cheeseboard, whether it's cheese for one, dinner for two, or a room full of party guests. This makes it a strong addition to any cheese gifting offering.

CHEESE-ROLLING RETURNS TO COOPER'S HILL

After two years of pandemic cancellations, the Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling and Wake took place once again in Gloucester, England last month, continuing a tradition that dates back over 200 years. Groups of racers once again chased a 3.5-kilogram round of Double Gloucester Cheese down an extremely steep and uneven hill, battling it out to keep the cheese.

QUICKE'S LAUNCHES HIGHLY LIMITED EDITION EWE'S MILK CHEESE

Quicke's has released a small-batch ewe's milk cheese that has been handcrafted and naturally matured on their family farm in Devon for 12 months. Highly limited, this cheese will only be available during the summer.

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HOW TO HOST: CHEESE EVENTS

Cheese events can be a great way to engage with your existing customers and potentially find new ones. But how can cheesemongers use their unique knowledge and skills to host them successfully?

According to Izaak Edge, manager of The Cheeseworks Cheltenham, "It's easier than you think to go about hosting cheese tasting evenings. People absolutely love cheese, and it's not hard to get them interested."

In fact, as Patricia Michelson, owner of La Fromagerie, explains, "We started in-house events after opening our second branch in Marylebone in 2002 and they were an instant success as customers wanted to learn more about cheese but also about pairing, seasonality, and regionality."

But there is a lot of work that goes into a successful cheese evening – it's not just a case of offering up a plate of cheese and glass of red wine. There are several things that are important to get right, and they might just make or break your cheese event.

Perfect pairings

Of course, the biggest decision is the cheese itself and accompanying pairings. As Fraser MacLellan, owner of Froth & Rind, explains, "You want customers to enjoy the cheese so much that they want to take some home and come back for more. If they tell friends and family about it that's even better."

In order to do this, you need some serious cheese knowledge, which indies are known for. "We have cheese teams who are literally nuts about cheese", Patricia explains. "They talk about it all day at work, even in their breaks, and we have a senior cheesemonger dedicated to education and learning who is creating systems, team talks and is a tutor and advisor with the Academy of Cheese.

"While we want to make our events as collectively enjoyable and delicious as possible, we want to give the attendees a real insight to help them build their choices and creativity when choosing cheese for cooking, cheese boards and gatherings with family and friends. We want to push forward to help create a wider knowledge as well as a curiosity in the world of cheese."

By using this knowledge, independent cheese shops can provide a truly unique experience for their customers and cheese-curious attendees. Fraser has learned, "Anything different, unusual or really strong gets people talking and involved in the evening. If there's a really pungent cheese, for example, many people may not fancy this, but if you can pair it well and bring out the best in the cheese and whatever you've paired it with then this will please everyone and a scary cheese suddenly isn't so scary after all.

"Sometimes we'll throw in a pairing that doesn't work, just so everyone can see that it really is a skill to find the really great pairings", he added.

Playing host

Hosting a successful cheese evening is a bit more complicated than just handing out pairings of cheese. For Fraser, "It's a case of taking our knowledge and sharing it with our customers in an engaging way. This will include background knowledge on the cheese, how it's made, and any interesting stories or history.

"In serving the cheese there's an opportunity to talk about all these things, plus other little things like why it's been portioned in a certain way or the pairings that you're going to serve it with. If there's time and space it can also be fun for the customers to see you portioning the cheese, again giving you the option of talking about why you're doing it that way."

Patricia mirrors these thoughts, "Having had nearly 20 years of experience in cheese events we have seen the progression of what people want from a tasting tutorial. It is as much to do with where the cheese comes from and its relationship with history, politics, the land and its pasture and breeds of animals."

Izaak adds, "People who want to be there are interested in the thing that you're talking about, so the more info that you have on the cheeses you're doing for the tasting, the better.

"It also helps to have a second person hosting with you I find, just so you can have someone to bounce off whilst you're doing the tasting. A danger of them is that it gets a bit too heavy, boring and technical, which isn't necessarily what people want. If you keep it a bit lighter, people will be more engaged and tend to enjoy it more as well!"

> "It's a case of taking our knowledge and sharing it with our customers in an engaging way"

Timings and space

An important issue to consider is when to host your cheese evenings. Fraser explains, "We find that weekends aren't great as a lot of people already have other plans. The start of the week is also a tough sell as everyone is back at work. We'd go for a Thursday normally, as people are getting into that weekend feeling and a cheese evening is a good intro to the weekend."

How many people to host is also worth thinking about, as trying to cram in as many people as possible can backfire. Fraser adds, "Of course, you need to make a profit so you'll need a minimum number of people, but cheese evenings work best when they are quite intimate and the guests can get more involved with us or the other guests. It's important that everyone there feels part of the evening and can properly hear everything that's being said."

Izaak concludes, "Limited indoor space is something that we struggle with, as we only have a tiny shop. I've done plenty of tastings outside though, and as long as the weather is okay, they work fine, it's an easy fix! Plus, most people enjoy sitting outside when it's warm and having a nice cool drink and some delicious cheese!"



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JEN GRIMSTONE-JONES
PANGBOURNE CHEESE SHOP



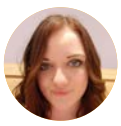
SUNIT MEHTA
ROWCLIFFE



KATIE KITIRI
YUMBLES



SVETLANA KUKHARCHUK
THE CHEESE LADY



JESSICA HONEY
CURD & CURE



GARY JUNGHEIM
COUNTRY CHEESES

ARTISAN CHEESE IN 2022

Working through the cost of living crisis is a current battle for the UK's cheese industry, as challenges stack up – but opportunities abound, too

In 2022, it might feel a bit like we're out of the frying pan and into the fire. The last two years have been a challenging time for the UK's cheese sector. Covid caused issues with staff shortages due to illness, a country in sporadic lockdowns and a reduced footfall in towns and cities across the country. If the cheese sector learned anything from these tough times, it's how to be resilient. And so, as we find ourselves in a cost of living crisis in 2022, it's best foot forward for cheesemakers, cheesemongers and distributors. But it isn't easy. In some ways we might feel like we've been here before and we're battle hardened, but this time around the fight is different.

"I'm generally a positive person but we're being hit on all sides," says Clare Jackson from Slate Cheese in Suffolk. "It started around the Easter break. We noticed then that people are buying smaller pieces of cheese. Customers used to ask us to cut a decent wedge, but now they ask for it to be sliced to what they can afford. We've started cutting the cheese paper to smaller pieces as we just don't need the larger sheets of cheese paper we used to use." The cost of living crisis is a multi-pronged problem and it's affecting businesses country-wide. Jen Grimstone-Jones from The Pangbourne Cheese shop in Reading is also feeling the heat. There are things that can be done to mitigate the costs a little, as Jen explains, but this firefighting is still difficult. "We are seeing price increases across the board. Everything is going up in price on an almost weekly basis. We have seen rises in the costs of utility supplies as well as fuel. We are lucky with our own deliveries as we have an electric van which is charged using solar energy, but any orders that we send out by courier are subject to higher courier fees as well as the cost of the packaging."

> "Overall retail dairy sales volumes for the full year 2022 are expected to be down versus 2021 but up slightly versus 2019, +6% for cheese"
>
> **SOURCE: THE AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

The Covid factor

There's some strong evidence that the issues presented by covid have shifted, if not completely gone away. The cheese sector made a solid recovery from covid and The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board's findings paint a promising picture. Overall retail dairy sales volumes for the full year 2022 are expected to be down versus 2021 but up slightly versus 2019, + 6% for cheese. This means the sector is doing better than it was before the pandemic. For Clare Jackson the problems brought on by covid have just about been resolved and in fact covid did bring some benefits to their small town in Suffolk which is reliant on tourism. The rise in staycations during the summer of covid meant more tourists in the town, which meant more people browsing the shops and buying more. "We make most of our money in the summer months," Clare explains. "The autumn is always a lull in sales and then it picks up for Christmas, but we have to make enough through summer to see us through." During Covid times this wasn't a problem as UK tourism was booming, but the stark difference between last year and this year, due to the cost of living crisis, is worrying. "A reduced footfall in the town is detrimental to our business," Clare says.





A NEW NORMAL

In the current climate price rises are inevitable. Businesses don't want to do this and many will put it off as long as possible, but many consumers who buy artisan cheeses understand the challenges faced by businesses operating in the sector.

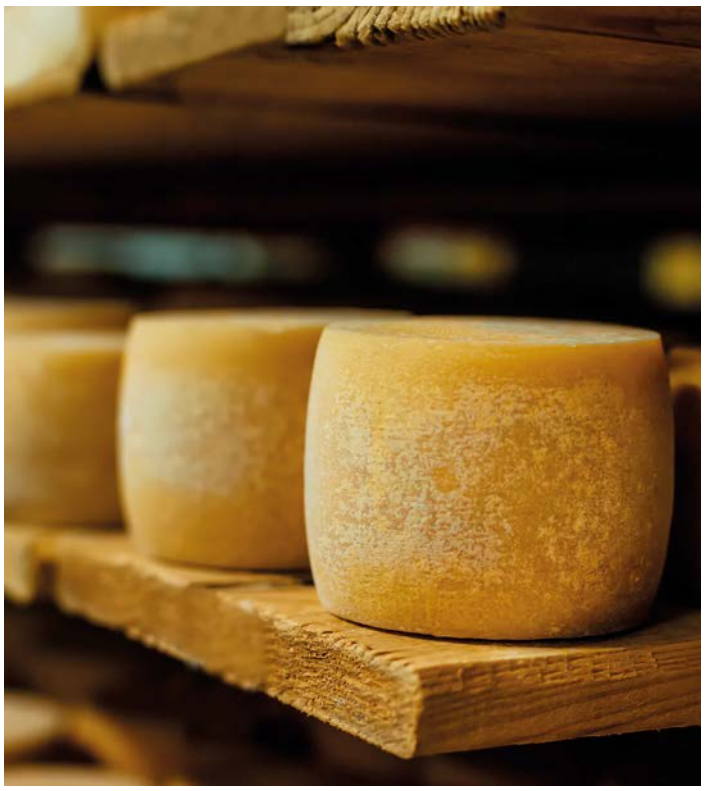
"We are having to pass some of these price hikes onto customers, but we are also really aware that everyone is struggling so we are trying to absorb the increases where we can," says Jen Grimstone-Jones of Pangbourne Cheese Shop. "The majority of our customers are prepared to pay that little bit more for high quality and they would rather have less of something really nice than a lot of a lower quality product."

At Rowcliffe, one of Britain's leading importers and distributors of cheese and fine foods, they have an umbrella perspective on the cost of living crisis and how it is affecting all aspects of food production and distribution. "Fuel prices have a direct effect on transport costs and therefore on distribution costs, these drive-up production and distribution costs and hence lower profits for businesses," says Sunit Mehta, managing director. "Food businesses are being forced to pass on their rising costs to customers as they report being worse hit by inflation as compared to other businesses."

For many businesses, not putting up prices just isn't viable, but most will try to minimise this as much as possible. Online artisan food market, Yumbles, has seen this first hand. "Unfortunately, the price rises are impacting just about every cheese producer on Yumbles, across nearly every aspect of their production," says Katie Kitiri. "For example, cheese producer Godminster has reported packaging and raw material supplies have gone up in price, but that increase varies wildly depending on the supplier, between 15% to 57%. This is the same story affecting the vegan alternative producers on Yumbles too. This can be a particular challenge for small and artisanal producers and with such an extent in rises it is inevitable that some of the increase has to be passed onto customers. However, we have seen for now at least that most producers on Yumbles are sparingly rising prices, and where they are, they are often looking to add more value to customers in other ways."

The Cheese Lady has had a similar experience. "The rising costs of fuel and raw ingredients are definitely affecting the traditional cheese sector. However, so far we have been fortunate not to get too many price increases from the majority of our suppliers," says owner Svetlana Kukharchuk. But she knows it's only a matter of time before the issue does land on her doorstep. "It is inevitable and when our purchase costs rise, the increases will have to be passed on to customers."





A DAIRY FREE-FOR-ALL

One area of cheese production and sales that's been steadily increasing in demand is vegan cheese. As the number of consumers opting for a vegan lifestyle surge, so too does the innovation around this burgeoning sector – and the vegan cheeses available on shelves in 2022 are a far cry from the originals.

"We saw a huge drop in sales of vegan cheese during the lockdown periods," says Jen Grimstone-Jones. "Whereas we were selling more of everything else in the shop at this time, the vegan cheese sales fell off a cliff." But now everything is changing. Cheesemakers are perfecting their recipes and vegan cheese is not just good now, it's really good. It's a slow area of growth and many retailers are still finding it hard to sell, but the seeds that have been planted are starting to bloom. The global vegan cheese market size is projected to reach a CAGR of 16% during 2022-2028 according to Designer Women. It might feel like slow progress, but it's a safe bet for the future. "Sales have begun to pick up again but not quite to the same levels as we were seeing before," says Jen. "Our minimum order quantity has gone up with our vegan supplier so we often struggle to meet it, but we will only sell products that we would eat ourselves and at the moment we only sell KindaCo products." For other retailers it's all about choice and at Curd & Cure they've found the more varieties of vegan cheese they carry, from a wide range of producers, the better for the customer. "Vegan cheese is a market we have seen grow exponentially and anticipate this growth continuing," says Jessica Honey, commercial manager at Curd & Cure. "From when we first began listing vegan cheese around five years ago, the variety and quality has come on leaps and bounds. We now list around 50-plus varieties of vegan cheeses and alternative dairy products and have worked hard to find the very best producers in the country who are extremely skilled in what they do. Again, there are parallels with dairy cheese, and whilst we anticipate that consumers will be looking for options with lower price points, which we offer as part of this range, we are still seeing much demand for artisan, British produced vegan cheese which demands a higher price point."

THE GLOBAL **VEGAN** CHEESE **MARKET** SIZE IS **PROJECTED** TO REACH A **CAGR** OF **16%** DURING **2022-2028**

SOURCE: DESIGNER WOMEN

It's a point Rowcliffe has seen in action. Whether the higher price of vegan cheese wins out with customers who have more focused needs, is yet to be seen. "Vegan cheese is very much a growing trend, but quality alternatives are expensive," says Sunit Mehta. "Therefore, we can expect a similar impact on sales to that which we have seen in dairy cheese."



THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Being more environmentally minded is at the forefront of all food businesses, from cheesemakers to distributors and retailers, with many innovating and investing heavily in a sustainable future.

This is a smart strategy as it not only keeps the business more sustainable, it also cuts down on those rising fuel costs. It's something the cheese sector is seeing in all aspects of the business, from production right through to sales. By 2025 85% of dairy farmers will be following expert advice to optimise feed plans, which is directly linked to reduced emissions. Optimising feed plans also reduces waste, which reduces costs. At Curd & Cure they're also seeing the benefits of going green. "We work with our customers to ensure deliveries are kept to a minimum, delivering to specific delivery areas on set days of the week," says Jessica Honey. "We are also in the process of investing in new routing software to ensure our routes are planned as efficiently as possible. This will help offset the additional costs involved with transporting goods and ensure we are keeping our carbon footprint to a minimum. Sustainability features heavily at the heart of all that we do, and this works hand in hand with efficiencies in delivering product. As well as ensuring we are constantly reviewing our own environmental impact, the partnership with more dairies helps to reduce their costs as deliveries are consolidated to us and delivered to the customer as part of a wider basket of products."

Jessica sees this push forward with sustainability as the path to the future of the business. It has a knock-on affect to all corners of Curd & Cure. "Sustainability within the business also links back to keeping our prices competitive, through initiates which limit waste such as upcycling products, including Stilton and Cheddar used in our Rescue Range Soups, working with Too Good To Go to create 'magic bags' containing end of shelf life products as well as working closely with our supplier dairies to monitor and manage supply and demand in real time across all product lines."

These initiatives fight back against the cost of living crisis in the same multi-pronged way as the crisis hits businesses. By using surplus ingredients in their Rescue Range they cut down on waste, and by working with Too Good To Go they claw back some of the costs that are lost in food waste. These savings feed back into the business and help Curd & Cure keep their prices at a reasonable level.

BY 2025 **85%** OF **DAIRY** FARMERS WILL BE FOLLOWING **EXPERT** ADVICE TO **OPTIMISE** FEED **PLANS**, WHICH IS **DIRECTLY** LINKED TO **REDUCED** EMISSIONS

SOURCE: DAIRY UK

CUSTOMER SERVICE RULES

For businesses who are having to pass on price increases to the customers, the path ahead is paved with customer service.

At Slate Cheese the team is looking at ways to make browsing and shopping for cheese more of an experience. In our post pandemic times people want that human touch and a more personal service could be the key to navigating these choppy waters we are in. "With suppliers increasing prices and overheads and packaging going up, we are having to put prices up," says Clare Jackson. "We can't discount right now, so we're doubling down on customer service instead. We're perfectly placed to tell stories of local produce in Suffolk, and we can give out tasters while we talk about the journey of the cheese. People always get to taste before they buy in our shop."

Clare makes a point of looking for the positives and notes that people will be more likely to entertain at home during this crisis, rather than spending money on eating out. This means cheese businesses can diversify their range and offer more accompaniments to cheese. Sunit Mehta from Rowcliffe agrees. "Consumers will adapt their consumption in a variety of ways in order to save money including trading down, eating out less and buying more value range items." At Rowcliffe they see a range of possibilities for combatting the price hikes in the supply and production of cheese. "The introduction of smaller pack sizes is expected," he says. "Businesses are exploring alternative sectors and customers to help widen the market. Everyone will be trying to reduce and cut costs in other areas in a bid to avoid passing costs onto customers."

PACKAGING AND **RAW** MATERIAL SUPPLIES HAVE GONE **UP** IN **PRICE** BY BETWEEN **15%** TO **57%**

SOURCE: GODMINSTER

SEARCHING FOR SILVER LININGS

The cost-of-living crisis isn't going anywhere anytime soon, and businesses have to find the chinks in the armour of this towering issue. There are many benefits to shopping small and as the trend for consumers to stay local continues, delis and farm shops can benefit from this. By continuing the valuable work they did during the pandemic, and continuing to innovate, there could be light within the darkness for indies.

Small town cheese shops and delis are perfectly placed to cut down on transportation costs. Locally sourcing directly from dairies and other nearby producers gives specialist retailers an edge over supermarkets in this crisis. Curd & Cure's Jessica sees a lot to be positive about amid the doom and gloom of the crisis. "Over recent years the support for British made cheese in the market has rapidly spiked. In response to this we have been able to partner with more up and coming dairies and connect them with our retailers and chefs. Despite the effects of cost of living and costs to business increases, we are confident that this support for British and artisan makers will continue. There will, of course, be consumers who choose this as a luxury. But we are confident that by having a wide variety of options and sharing the story of the producer, customers are happy to invest in their local and wider British economy and support these dairies."

At Country Cheeses in Topham, Essex, they see this crisis as an opportunity to build tighter bonds in their businesses and they remain positive about the future of cheese in the UK. "We can really focus our relationship building with our strong and very loyal customer foundation, who enjoy and will continue to enjoy the experience of our shops," says Gary Jungheim at Country Cheeses. Customer service and sustainability play a big part in the future of food businesses for Gary. "Customers can have as much or as little as they wish which has become more important now from a cost perspective, but it also helps when we're looking into reducing waste." So far they've been lucky at Country Cheeses and Gary is philosophical about the future. "We haven't noticed a change in shopping habits with our present customers, and we look forward to welcoming new customers who want to invest in a better product which returns more value in food, and social and economic terms alike. While prices will rise on all food, you get spades more return from artisan and small producers nearer to home."

For online retailers the benefits



are clear. Not only do they bask in the absence of overheads and the minimising of the rising costs of energy, they can also offer a service to those customers who are choosing to stay at home more. As the staycation bubble withers a little because of costs, staying home might be where inroads can be made and online shopping could build back to pandemic levels. Although ultimately people want a return to their pre pandemic lives, the cost of living crisis is holding them back from fully embracing this. It does seem, however, that the desire to shop locally is strong, even if that is online shopping. Katie Kitiri from Yumbles online deli sees a lot of support for buying British. "While we have seen that demand for cheese has slowed down in the last couple of months, we are optimistic that ultimately the consumer trends towards quality over quantity and supporting small British businesses like those on Yumbles will prevail and sustain our fantastic producers in the tough months ahead."

Svetlana at The Cheese Lady agrees and believes it's the desire for good quality food that keeps customers coming back. "I'm sure that rising food prices have made some consumers hesitant to buy products that they would consider a luxury. The cost of living crisis is definitely a big concern for everyone, especially in the food sector. But I'd like to think that good wholesome food will always be in demand."

Looking ahead

Food services and businesses can take comfort from some encouraging statistics from the School of Marketing. Whereas in 2018-2020, 90.37 food businesses failed for every 100 that began, in 2020 to 2022 that figure fell to 80.51. It's a similar story in retail where the number was 79.75 in the years between 2018 and 2020 and 69.94 in the years 2020 to 2022. Although the current cost of living crisis is still playing out and the future is uncertain, many producers, distributors and retailers are seeing a lot to be optimistic about. At Country Cheeses building and maintaining relationships in the business at all levels is vital, and supporting each other has never been more important than it is now. "We have always been supportive of small, local, artisan makers and our future plan is to continue to do just that," says Gary. "We have extremely strong relationships with our cheesemakers based on years and years of close communication, regular visits to collect cheese, catch up and a mutual respect for a fine product. These guys are the future, not just for the cheeses they make but also for the jobs and local employment they offer too."

Such an uncertain future can make planning ahead feel precarious, but in a business where nothing is ever certain and in times where we have all learned to adapt, what the cheese sector has in abundance is resilience and determination. Gary from Country Cheeses believes history has a lot to teach us and that the traditions of cheesemaking and cheese-mongering will prove to be the map that leads the cheese sector through this crisis. "The best way to plan ahead is by reflecting on the past and focusing on what's really important – tradition, quality, value for money and encouraging small scale food production. Less miles equals more food security. Artisan is always artisan, so even during difficult circumstances quality won't be sacrificed as it will in mass food production."

A wide variety of products and a variety of ways to sell it will clear a pathway through the fires for cheese businesses at all levels. As we move from covid to the cost of living crisis, the issues may change, but a response of flexibility and an ability to change with changing times, will bring light to the cheese sector in the UK. "It is undoubtably going to be a time of change," says Jessica at Curd & Cure, "but we are confident that by offering ranges which cater both to the more price sensitive end of the market, and those with a higher price point, with the quality, provenance, and story to back this up, retailers will be able to position themselves to ensure they are catering to a wider variety of needs. Britain now produces more varieties of cheese than France and with constant innovation in the market both in dairy and non-dairy, there is plenty to keep consumers engaged and excited in our flourishing industry."



WHEREAS IN 2018 – 2020 **90.37** FOOD BUSINESSES **FAILED** FOR EVERY **100** THAT **BEGAN**, IN 2020 TO 2022 THAT FIGURE **FELL** TO **80.51.** IT'S A SIMILAR STORY IN **RETAIL** WHERE THE NUMBER WAS **79.75** IN THE YEARS BETWEEN 2018 AND 2020 AND IS **69.94** IN THE YEARS 2020 TO 2022

SOURCE: THE SCHOOL OF MARKETING



ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS

Whether you're looking for ambient items to enliven your shelves, festive-ready treats, kid-friendly items, snacking stars or innovative new products for your drinks offering, this selection of handpicked artisan food and drink is bound to bring your shop to life this Autumn/Winter. Clear some space on your shelves; these items are well worth checking out



GOAT DRINKS

If energy drinks aren't your thing then The Horny Goat just might be. Lightly carbonated, naturally caffeinated and packed with B vitamins, zinc and co enzyme q10, The Horny Goat will give you energy to enjoy whatever your day brings. Myth is a rum-inspired alcohol-free cane spirit. The dark is strong and bold, ideal to mix with ginger or cola. The light is sweet and flavoured with natural coconut; serve straight over ice or in your favourite cocktail, no alcohol needed! All Goat drinks are vegan and gluten-free, and contain 0% alcohol.

079671 58116 info@goatdrinks.co.uk

GOATDRINKS.COM



SUMMERDOWN

Made from their signature Black Mitcham peppermint grown on the family farm in Hampshire, Summerdown's collection includes their classic range of original dark chocolate peppermint creams, peppermint thins, crisps and soft-centred dominoes. The individually-wrapped Heritage fondants and crisps, made with 70% dark chocolate, offer a more grown-up taste, whilst the indulgent truffles and ultimate mint chocolate collection make perfect Christmas presents. The three bars complete the collection. Their range of three herbal teas: Peppermint, Camomile and Peppermint & Camomile, made entirely from herbs grown on their Hampshire farm, are the perfect way to end a meal and can also aid digestion and sleep.

01256 780 252 info@summerdownmint.com

SUMMERDOWN.COM



TREAT KITCHEN

Enjoy the sweet nostalgia of Christmas magic with these wonderful, 'wintertime' themed truffle treats. A reusable Gingerbread Tin filled with deliciously salted caramel Belgian truffles, infused with all the rich chocolatey goodness you'll ever need over the Christmas period. Perfect for sharing and most definitely very, very moreish! This novelty tin can be reused to store or display a variety of small items, including a tea light holder, and even placing your Christmas fairy lights inside! A yummy, sweet chocolate treat that tastes just as good as it looks – they don't make them like this anymore!

01159 508 150 sales@ttkconfectionery.co.uk

TREATKITCHEN.CO.UK



CAMBROOK NUTS

Award-winning Cambrook Nuts are specialists at baking, seasoning and caramelising the best grades of nuts. Their savoury nuts are baked (not fried), either for salting or for seasoning with our original recipes of spices, herbs and flavours. Caramelising is skillfully done in traditional Continental roasting pans. It's a slow, gentle process and one that gives the nuts their unique taste and sparkle. Available in 45g, 80g and 140g packets along with glass jars and gift sets, we have the perfect range to suit all requirements. Cambrook Nuts' recyclable packaging roll out continues apace with most products switched from single use plastic to recyclable by the end of 2022.

01264 319 980 info @cambrookfoods.co.uk

CAMBROOKFOODS.CO.UK



THE REAL OLIVE COMPANY

The Real Olive Company are introducing two delicious, fresh organic vegan pestos to their range. The Organic Fresh Basil Pesto is a vibrant vegan pesto with rich and savoury notes achieved by the use of pumpkin seeds along with a blend of natural ingredients. The new vegan Organic Tomato and Olive Pesto is perfect for a quick and easy mid-week meal that's good for you whilst bringing luscious, warm, deep flavours to the table! The sweet red peppers and savoury sun dried tomatoes are lifted by the addition of fruity Kalamata olives to really harness the flavours of the Mediterranean.

01179 501 058 hello@therealolivecompany.co.uk

THEREALOLIVECOMPANY.CO.UK



JELLY BELLY FESTIVE DELIGHTS

Make the most of the festive season with one of Jelly Belly's deliriously delicious Jelly Belly jelly bean Acrylic gift boxes (try saying that after an Eggnog or two!) An addition to their fabulous original gift box range, these guys are eminently suited to Christmas gifting. The substantial 20 Assortment 454g box is now accompanied by the smaller seasonal five-flavoured 'HO HO HO' and 'NOEL' 113g boxes, just the ticket for stocking fillers for the Jelly Belly fan. Decisions have never been more delicious! You can always rely on Jelly Belly for providing the gift giving cheer this Christmas.

01727 829 010 uksales@bestimports.co.uk

BESTIMPORTS.CO.UK



WALKER'S NONSUCH

Unique to family toffee makers Walker's Nonsuch, Toffee Twin and Duo are great for giving and perfect for sharing. Toffee twin includes two chunky Original Creamy toffee bars with a traditional hammer and Duo contains Original and Brazil Nut bars. History of the company and instructions on how to break up the toffee is on the back of the pack. With over 125 years cooking experience and using whole milk and butter, the taste and chew is second to none. All Walker's toffee is free from artificial colours, preservatives, hydrogenated vegetable oils and gluten too.

01782 321 525 hello@walkers-nonsuch.co.uk

WALKERS-NONSUCH.CO.UK/TRADE



JAMU WILD WATER

Wild and wonderfully delicious, Jamu Wild Water is a sparkling botanical water designed for kids! Bursting with natural fruit flavours, these drinks contain zero sugar or artificial sweeteners. Instead, they benefit from the naturally sweet stevia leaf and when combined with powerful botanicals they create a healthy, sparkling and super tasty drink for kids to enjoy (without the nasties!). Jamu Wild Water is on a mission to reconnect kids with the magic of the natural world. They have pledged to give 10% of their profits to rewilding projects that serve to improve biodiversity and greater access to green spaces, for children to learn and play in nature.

0203 861 7902 hello@jamuwildwater.co.uk

JAMUWILDWATER.CO.UK



GRANDMA WILD'S

Since 1899, independent family company Grandma Wild's have specialised in making utterly crunchy and delicious biscuits using only the finest ingredients and following traditional family recipes, passed down through four generations. Their latest Christmas 2022 and Everyday product ranges include three new gift boxes with eye-catching designs, filled with either Dark Chocolate Ginger, Triple Chocolate Chip or All Butter Caramel and Sea Salt biscuits. Each flavour of biscuit is suitable for vegetarians, made with sustainable palm oil and free from artificial colours, but still crammed full of flavour. The perfect choice of gifts for all occasions and ages!

01535 650 500 orders@grandma-wilds.co.uk

GRANDMA-WILDS.CO.UK



SLEEPWELL MILK

Sleep Well is the natural bedtime drink, available in both dairy and plant-based options, that helps you relax and get a better night's sleep. There are three Sleep Well drinks available – delicious Vanilla or Chocolate made with whole milk and vegan-friendly Oat. All three have a nine-month shelf life. In 2022 Sleep Well relaunched in new eco-friendly two-serve SIG 500ml packaging, which has a better shelf presence, is easier to pour and serve and is more environmentally friendly. Available for sale as singles or trays of 12, Sleep Well is the only ready to drink sleep product available in the UK market.

hello@sleepwellmilk.com

SLEEPWELLMILK.COM



BOLLE DRINKS

At less than 0.5% ABV and only 20 calories a serve, Bolle is a revolutionary drinking experience consisting of two 'effortlessly effervescent' brewed drinks (white and rose) that are bringing impetus to a 'sober curious' community, whilst reinvigorating a low/no wine category that has historically failed to ignite either the taste buds or imagination of an increasingly influential #mindfuldrinking fraternity. According to founder Roberto, "The single biggest challenge for low and no alcohol products is delivering great taste. Most incumbent ranges are created by de-alcoholization, a physical process which removes alcohol from the liquid. I opted for an entirely new direction, namely fermenting juices without producing alcohol."

07810 852933 roberto.vanin@juicyriver.com

BOLLEDRINKS.COM



SEGGIANO

Seggiano's 10-strong line up of unique single-estate Organic Semi Fresh Herbs are partially cured in Italian rock salt using an innovative process that captures all of the delicious aromatic flavours of fresh herbs without losing the convenience or long shelf-life of dried herbs. Perfect for professional chefs and aspiring foodies alike, these practical, ever-fresh and at hand herbs can elevate home cooking to another level. They have a 14 months' shelf life from production. Once opened, they must be kept refrigerated and used within their best before date.

0207 272 5588 orders@seggiano.com

SEGGIANO.COM



LOACKER

Introducing the delicious Classic 'Winter Edition' range of Quadratini from Loacker, the pre-eminent Italian biscuit manufacturer whose name is synonymous with quality. Presenting bite size cubes of thin crisp wafer layers sandwiched together with wonderfully seasonal flavoured creams. A wintery Christmas treat with three intensely aromatic flavours evocative of the season to choose from: Speculoos-Orange, heady with the essence of spice and orange; intensely aromatic Cinnamon; and the perennial favourite, comforting and warming Gingerbread. These morsels of deliciousness are light, crisp and utterly moreish. Perfect for the season. Available in 250g bags.

01727 829 010 uksales@bestimports.co.uk

BESTIMPORTS.CO.UK

HAWKSHEAD RELISH

Hawkshead Relish's Black Garlic Ketchup is a storecupboard essential, made by cooking garlic over 45 days to create an exquisite dark, caramelised and sweet flavour. The Hawkshead Relish Company pride themselves on using all natural ingredients, with no artificial flavourings, colours or additives, and they now hold over 70 Great Taste Awards. The Black Garlic Ketchup encapsulates the company's success and has become a staple ingredient for many enthusiastic cooks. With an array of uses including marinading, with BBQs and mixing into mayonnaise, co-founder of Hawkshead Relish, Maria Whitehead MBE, recommends adding a spoonful of the Black Garlic Ketchup to the top of a salmon steak before baking for a delicious and simple midweek dinner.



01539 436 614

info@hawksheadrelish.com

HAWKSHEADRELISH.COM



OLINA'S BAKEHOUSE

Olina's Bakehouse offers a distinct premium range of savoury biscuits. Wafer Crackers are thinner than traditional crackers with a subtle taste, lighter texture and choice of flavours (Natural, Cracked Pepper, Sesame). The Double-baked Seeded Toasts are made with premium ingredients including real fruit, seeds and nuts (Cranberry & Pumpkin Seed, Cashew & Rosemary and Fig & Almond). Olina's Bakehouse's Free From Crackers are gluten-free, vegan and keto-friendly, with the newly introduced Simply Seeded Crackers and Flatbreads fast becoming the business's best-selling products.

07771 981420 mash@gourmetpartners.co.uk

GOURMETFOOD.COM.AU/UK



DARK WOODS COFFEE

Dark Woods Coffee's adventurous coffee range includes coffee beans and ground coffee in beautifully presented retail bags and re-usable tins. Quality is key to what they do, evidenced by numerous awards. Dark Woods Coffee offers a range of roasts and styles that truly reflect what people want to drink, making speciality coffee accessible to everyone, and is one of the first coffee roasters in the industry to be certified as a B Corp, giving 2% of their annual turnover to both local community projects and those centred around the coffee growing communities that they source from.

01484 843141 info@darkwoodscoffee.co.uk

DARKWOODSCOFFEE.CO.UK



EPIC OATS

British Epic Oats is a low-sugar, high-protein oat pot snack which combines oats with a separate deliciously flavoured crunchy granola topping. It is available in three quintessentially British flavours; Apple Crumble, Cherry Bakewell and Original. The brand is the healthiest oat pot on the market, the only one in the UK with all green traffic lights and one of the first to be 100% HFSS compliant with a -1 rating. The range is low in sugar, gluten-free, vegan friendly and high in fibre and protein. The pot is also fully recyclable.

sales@epicoats.com

EPICOATS.COM



FATSO

Ready to set dark chocolate on a collision course towards cool is FATSO, a dark chocolate bar that delivers uncompromising deliciousness without taking itself too seriously. FATSO cuts no corners when it comes to quality, and sources its single origin cacao from family-owned Luker's Farm in Columbia. FATSO has launched three delicious new bars: Morn'n Glory, a 60% cacao breakfast-inspired combination of cornflake, toast and orange marmalade; Home Run, a 60% cacao bar containing bumper chunks of salted pretzel, whole almonds and honeycomb; and Nan's Stash, a biscuit tin in a bar; 70% cacao and packed with peanuts, toffee and digestive biscuits.

sales@sofatso.com

SOFATSO.COM



DALTERFOOD GROUP

Handy, hygienic and fully customisable with their contents, cut, shape and weight, DalterFood Group's 100% recyclable single-serve sachets pick up on a growing market trend: food safety. They are fully customisable in terms of their contents (some of the raw materials include Parmigiano Reggiano, Grana Padano, Pecorino Romano, Pecorino Sardo as well as the vegetarian products Spinoro and Pastamore), cut (grated, flakes, fillets, shavings and many others), weight, the shape of the sachet itself and the client's brand. The sustainable pack is a major added value, all the more so when talking about disposable products.

DALTERFOOD.COM



NAKASERO

Nakasero is a premium brand that brings delicious, culinary gems to the shelves of high-end retailers and eateries. Our unique recipes are mouthwatering, with flavours inspired from our travels around the world, but proudly produced in the UK. Developed by Gita Raikundalia as a tribute to her Ugandan heritage and Indian culture. Giardiniera is a premium italian relish made from chilies, peppers, garlic, oregano and a selection of vegetables. This tangy crisp relish is bursting with flavour, bringing warmth from the chilli and a delicious crunch of fresh vegetables. It is sure to delight your taste buds. Enjoy with: salads, burgers, hot dogs, bruschetta, eggs - omelette, boiled, scrambled, sandwiches, toasties, paninis, wraps, pizza, antipasti and cheese boards, pasta, dirty fries and nachos. Vegan accredited • Sugar-free • Palm oil-free • Additive/Preservative free • Keto

info@nakasero.com

NAKASERO.COM



PETER'S YARD

Peter's Yard combines Swedish tradition with British craft and natural, quality ingredients to create their hand-baked sourdough crackers. Each batch begins with their 45-year-old sourdough starter, which is fermented for 16 hours for a unique, subtle flavour. Peter's Yard's baking tradition is inspired by 16th century Sweden when crispbread was baked at harvest time and preserved on a pole over fires to keep crisp during the long, dark winter months. Made in their craft bakery in London, every product in the range is crafted without shortcuts or artificial ingredients for award-winning flavour and crunch.

07968 803781 matt@petersyard.com

PETERSYARD.COM



LE GRUYÈRE AOP

Made in western Switzerland, Gruyère AOP has been produced in the same way since 1115AD, using raw milk from cows fed on grass in summer and hay in winter. It is the only cheese that has won the title of Best Cheese in the World at the World Cheese Awards four times, demonstrating how much work and skill is needed to create its unique and delicious flavour. Gruyère AOP can be found with different maturities: the Classic is matured for six months and has a delicate, nutty, creamy flavour. The Reserve is matured for 10 months and has a drier, more grainy mouthfeel. Then you can find an older Gruyère AOP, 14 months or more, giving it a much stronger flavour.

GRUYERE.COM



FUNGTN

Fungtn is the first alcohol-free craft beer brewed with functional mushrooms for more mindful merriment. Mushrooms have been used in health and wellness for thousands of years and are coming back into the mainstream as people look to the food and drink they consume to help make more conscious choices. The beer has an earthy, nutty, bitter flavour profile that pairs perfectly with hops, and is suitable for vegans and gluten-intolerants, so no one misses out. Stock up on this functional drink to help your customers keep their minds and bodies on good form with a hangover-free festive season.

hello@fungtn.com

FUNGTN.COM



SHEPHERDS PURSE

A favourite of Rick Stein and Raymond Blanc, Mrs Bell's Blue is considered to be one of the best ewes' milk blue cheeses in Europe. The meadowy sweetness coming from the sheep milk contrasts beautifully with the umami notes of salty blue cheese to deliver a rich, complex flavour. Milder than a Roquefort but punchy enough for any blue cheese fan. Mrs Bell's Blue is distinct in appearance with a bright white body, contrasting beautifully with the blue/green veins. Mrs Bell's Blue is Shepherds Purse's most awarded cheese on the international stage, having won more than 80 top awards.

01845 587 220 info@shepherdspurse.co.uk

SHEPHERDSPURSE.CO.UK



STOKES SAUCES

Stokes award-winning Tomato Ketchup is packed with plump, sweet tomatoes that have ripened beneath the Mediterranean sunshine. This rich tomato taste is followed by a kick of spices for Stokes Chilli Ketchup. For smoky background notes and a warming finish, Stokes Chipotle Ketchup uses Chipotle Chillies, which are Jalapenos left to ripen on the plant to a deep red, before being smoked, for their distinctive flavour. Stokes Curry Ketchup marries rich tomato tastes with classic curry spices including coriander, turmeric, fenugreek, ginger, cumin, and green cardamom. Stokes Bloody Mary Ketchup adds a shot of vodka and a unique blend of spices.

hello@stokessauces.co.uk 01394 462 150

STOKESSAUCES.CO.UK



DENZELS

Introducing Denzel's special festive treats for dogs that are healthy for pooches and the planet. From their pigs in blankets bauble to their giant tube of Christmas lunch treats, there really is something for everyone. Denzel's limited-edition festive gifts come in a variety of price points and formats. All Denzel's healthy snacks are gently baked in the UK using eco-friendly ovens. They only ever use 100% natural ingredients from local UK suppliers and add fresh wonky fruit from local suppliers that would have otherwise gone to waste. Plus, all Denzel's packaging is totally plastic-free!

0208 004 9111

daisy@denzels.co.uk

DENZELS.CO.UK



BLUE GOOSE

Blue Goose Coffee has created the UK's first Eco Coffee Pod Advent Calendar. Each pod is filled with speciality-grade coffee that features a compelling environmental and people story, from their certified bird-friendly coffee to an Ethiopian Forest-grown coffee and two grown by female-only co-operatives. Their organic Sail Ship coffee, which is sailed over from Columbia by schooner which cuts emissions, noise and ocean pollution associated with container ships by 98% and is seen as the future in coffee bean transport. A select number of calendars will also feature Golden Eggs, giving recipients the chance to win anything from coffee subscriptions to Nespresso machines.

07795 564211 hello@bluegoose.coffee

BLUEGOOSE.COFFEE/SFM

VICHY CATALAN

Vichy Catalan is a leading table water brand and a benchmark in carbonated natural mineral waters. Its special mineral and medicinal properties and unmistakable bubbles have made it a favourite among consumers and restaurateurs, making a regular appearance in prestigious hotel and catering establishments around the world. With more than 140 years of history, the timeless of its benefits its benefits which last through time and multitude of attributes. The universality is present in all the company's values which have been building its ADN from 1881: Health, Research, Diversification and Sustainability.

+34 606321371

m.catala@pmg1881.com

VICHYCATALAN.COM/EN/





JELLY BELLY

Not one but TWO Advent calendar offerings from Jelly Belly for this year. Famously the tastiest way to celebrate the family countdown to Christmas. Mr Jelly Belly and his ever faithful dog Fido are featured decorating their perfect tree on one and, brand new for this year, we have the utterly magical Harry Potter™ version featuring Hogwarts castle and Hedwig. An absolute must for the Harry Potter fan. Behind each numbered day are Pyramid Bags of popular Jelly Belly jelly bean flavours. A delightfully fun and absolutely delicious festive treat for all ages. Generously proportioned, the boxes accommodate 24 Pyramid bags of Jelly Belly jelly bean deliciousness.

01727 829 010 uksales@bestimports.co.uk

BESTIMPORTS.CO.UK



BANHOEK CHILLI OIL

Handcrafted in the beautiful Banhoek Valley near Stellenbosch, Banhoek Chilli Oil is a handcrafted, premium grade, artisan chilli oil made from just two ingredients: the highest quality rapeseed oil and dried Thai Birdseye chillies. 100% natural, no preservatives. Winner of a Great Taste 2019 award, this delicious, golden-hued oil delivers just the right level of spice. Whether your customers like their food fiery hot or just a tickle on the tongue, Banhoek Chilli Oil has been specifically created to complement a wide range of ingredients and consistently delivers that something special to stir fries, marinades, vegetarian and vegan cuisine, meat, fish, seafood, pasta, pizza, eggs – the only limit is your imagination!

ed@banhoekchillioil.uk

BANHOEKCHILLIOIL.CO.UK



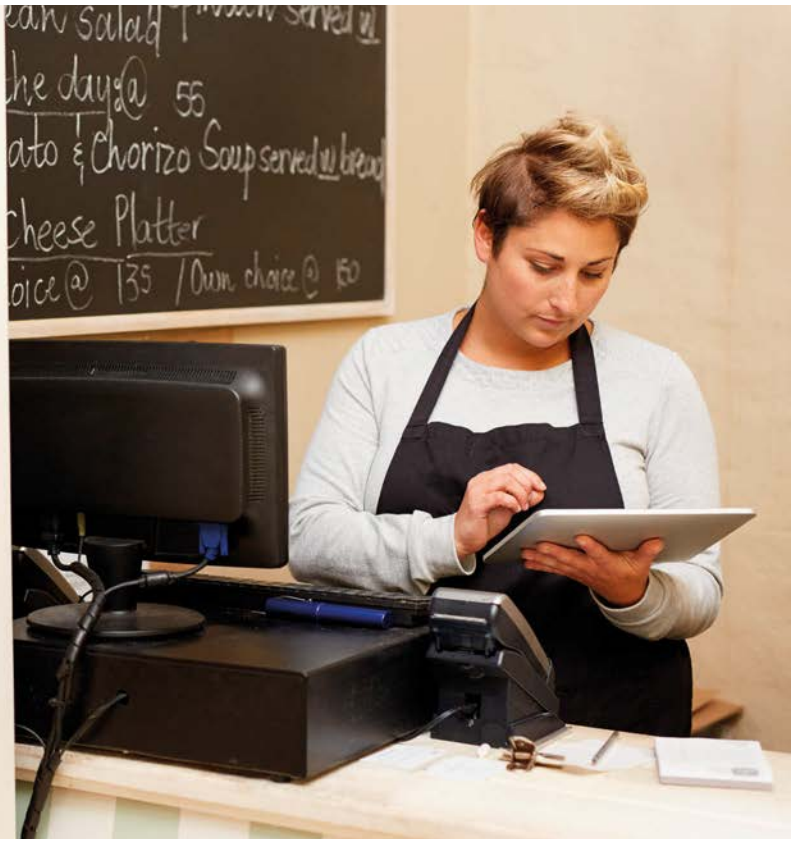
THE VERY HAPPY BELLY CO.

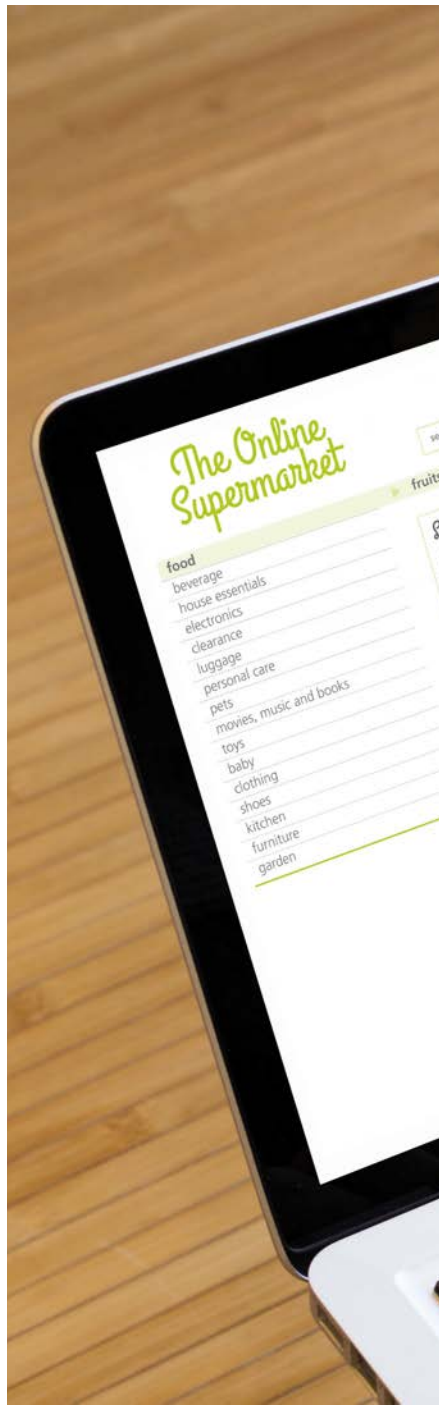
The Very Happy Belly Co.'s irresistible baking kits can give your customers an afternoon when they switch off and focus on creating delicious sweet or savoury treats with as little stress as possible. The brand offers indulgent options such as Triple Chocolate Brownies, Cookie Dough Pizzas, and Cherry Bakewell Blondies. There are also free-from kits for customers with dietary requirements. The Very Happy Belly Co is also passionate about promoting mental health awareness, community and healthy well-being, so they make regular donations to charities that work with those struggling in the locality.

hello@theveryhappybelly.com

THEVERYHAPPYBELLY.COM







THE TECH EFFECT

A carefully balanced blend of tradition and innovation is key to retail success in 2022, finds Ellen Manning

COMMENTATORS



TERRY BAKER
THE NOWT PONCY FOOD COMPANY



MICHAEL PRICE
PRICES SPICES



PHILIP LINARDOS
SHELFNOW



FLO BROUGHTON
CHOC ON CHOC



DEBBIE GALLACHER
GALLACHERS WINE MERCHANTS



TANNY GILL
CLARKS

When it comes to fine food and drink, traditions are often key. Artisan products, made using methods that have been around for decades, sometimes centuries, sold in environments that often have a traditional feel to them, from farm shops to delis or specialist retailers offering the kind of knowledge and service that we often miss in big multiples.

But while fine food retail may be steeped in history and tradition, that doesn't mean to say it hasn't moved forward, particularly in recent years. We may still love the old-school feel of artisan food and drink, but in many ways how we shop for it has changed. "For most food businesses who deal direct with the consumer or other businesses, the role of using technology has vastly changed," says Terry Baker, head of marketing and sales at artisan sauce makers The Nowt Poncy Food Company. "This change for us has allowed smarter working, ensuring we get the best engagement possible." This kind of adoption of tech has touched every part of the sector, from artisan food producers who sell direct to customers themselves, or retailers who sell a range of those products, with innovation helping every part of the process, from finding and buying new products to storing them and keeping track of stock, as well as the actual job of selling to customers.

The value of speed

When it comes to artisan food and drink, the beauty lies in the traditional, handmade nature of the process behind it but that doesn't mean that technology can't help when used in the right way, says Michael Price, owner of award-winning Prices Spices and recently-launched charcuterie brand Cureights. Price, who formerly worked at Aston Martin, has injected a tech element into his business, developing his own web apps that help organise and run it. The apps feature everything from stock intake to batch recipes showing evidence of full traceability and means he can create his products easily and accurately, as well as minimising the number of things he has to touch as he works. "Our systems are simple and are based on simple free technology, HTML/CSS front end just like any website and coded with Javascript and simple databases," he says. "The systems merely came about from wanting to save time and mistakes when doing things manually. Artisan food is still very much a touchy-feely kind of craft - one breed of pig is different to the next and a true artisan knows how to modify and tweak things despite having a full suite of automated processes. Having tools to help speed up and simplify the parts that can be is what is the key ie speeding up the process of time-consuming calculations and removing the need to introduce bad bacteria from touching objects that aren't required."

A new way to connect

Once products have been created, the next step of the process is selling them or getting them stocked by retailers. For decades, that process has revolved around relationships between producers and buyers or retailers, but harnessing technology is offering new ways to connect independent retailers and buyers with artisan food and drink brands. One example is London-based Shelfnow, which was founded in 2019 and now represents more than 4,000 products from hundreds of artisan food and beverage brands across 12 European countries.

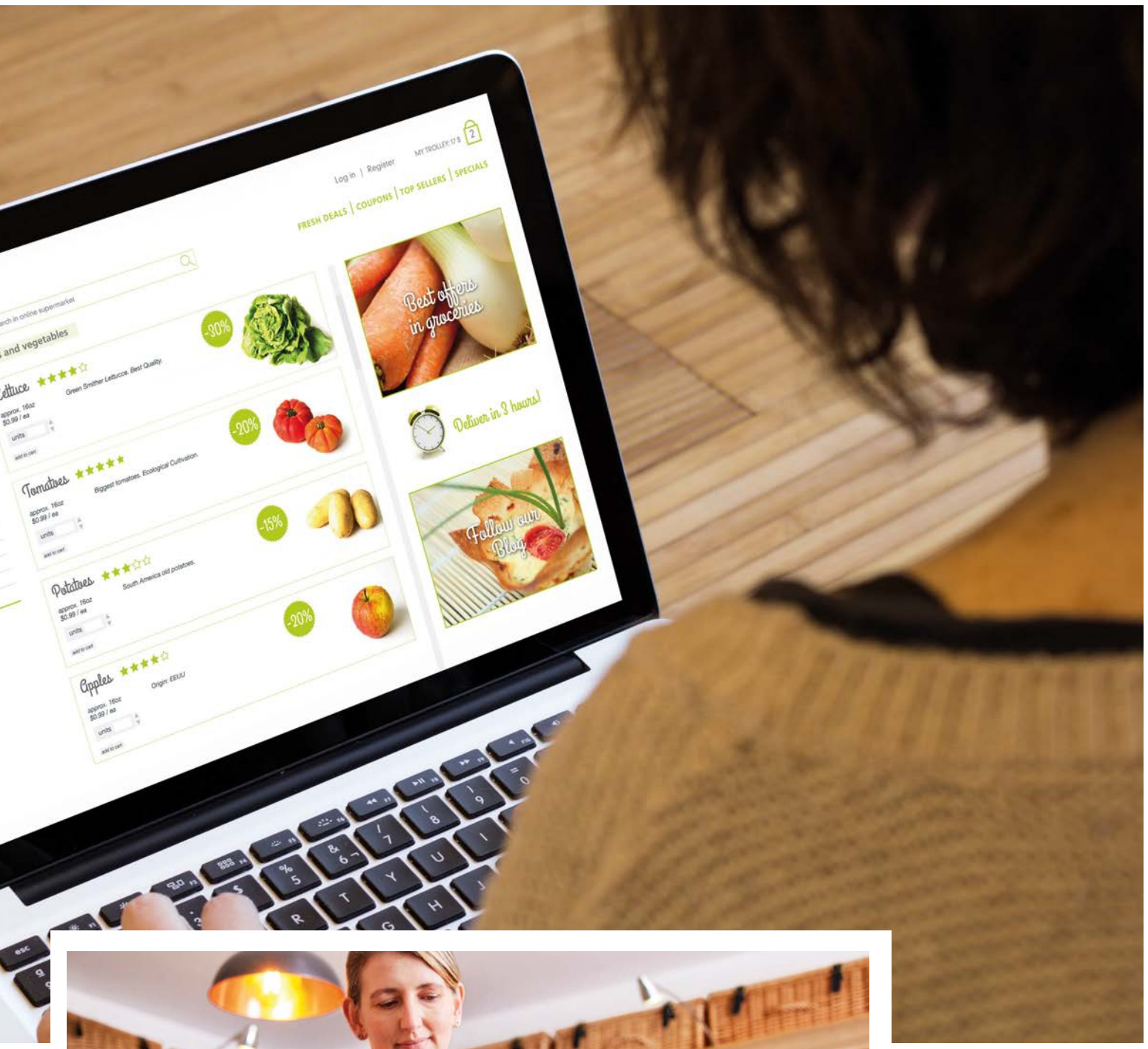
"I set up ShelfNow in 2019 with my co-founder Sajid Ghani to help specialist brands and independent retailers trade as directly as possible," founder Philip Linardos tells *Speciality Food*.

"The traditional wholesale model is often too costly and inefficient for many smaller businesses and after many conversations with hundreds of SMEs, we became determined to make the process as smooth as possible for these producers and buyers." The service not only allows businesses to make savings, but also uses technology including machine learning to offer its own unique product recommendations, as well as blockchain to ensure supply chain transparency. "As our platform gathers more information on our buyers based on their previous purchases or what they browse, it provides highly tailored product recommendations for them," adds Linardos. "We manage all of the invoicing and payment for our partners so that they can focus on direct communication and building relationships with one another through the platform. We also make use of automation in different areas such as our customer care service which is able to respond very quickly to enquiries as a result of our technology."

A vital tool

From a producer's point of view, technology can help deal with the nitty gritty of selling your product to buyers, either wholesale or directly to consumers. Flo Broughton, chief chocolate lady at Somerset-based Choc on Choc, has invested in technology to support various parts of the operation of the business, from production to stock-checking and processing orders. "We have had our own production system made to manufacture. This allows us to allocate chocolates to a certain maker and packer for traceability

> "If the adaptation of tech is not happening from the people who are going to use it it becomes very difficult – the whole tech journey becomes half-hearted and feels like money spent the wrong way"





and when that maker hands their list back in at the end of the week we scan a barcode at the top which auto-fills if complete and if not we make an adjustment. This then feeds out a packing sheet for the packers so that they can correctly pack what has been made." Alongside this, the company uses e-commerce platform Linnworks to integrate all of its online platforms, so all orders come into one place. The system checks the stock then shows staff which orders to process, and as that processing happens, each chocolate that is used is then deducted off the stock. "We now have full view of all stock on the systems and orders leaving and to whom. The system will tell us what box to pack the item in as well."

Streamlining retail models

When it comes to communicating with the customer, the beauty of fine food and drink retail is often the personal touch that is lacking for consumers when they shop in large multiples. That is unlikely to change, but it doesn't mean that technology can't help retailers to streamline their processes, freeing them up to spend more time with customers. It also is opening up new ways for products to be showcased in some settings. For Debbie Gallacher, owner of Gallachers Wine Merchants in Rugby, Warwickshire, the use of WineEmatic dispensers allows them to offer tastings of wine for customers without opening whole bottles, as well as providing the opportunity to add the offering of a wine bar to its business model. "We saw the WineEmatic in another wine merchants during our research prior to initially opening. It's a great way for customers to try before they buy a full bottle and enables us to offer a small sample when we are recommending wines. An added benefit is that customers can have just a small glass instead of purchasing a full bottle when drinking in. Alternatively, they can use the sample option 25ml and have their own small wine tasting with friends. It keeps the wine fresher for longer, rather than having to open bottles that would go off after a couple of days. It is a major tech positive and a great addition to the wine merchants."

In addition to this, they use various software and apps to manage stock and inventory, monitor pricing, and to process sales and invoices. "Obviously face-to-face sales are always better than online ordering," adds Gallacher. "Zoom tastings have worked, but they take a lot of work and organisations and, like anything, all tech is great until the internet connection fails!"

A delicate balance

The general view seems clear. Technology is becoming increasingly important in the world of artisan food and drink, streamlining production, taking away the headache of paperwork when it comes to stock and inventory, and helping retailers and producers communicate with customers more easily than ever before. But while it is lightening the load in many ways, it's not as simple as merely adopting as much tech as possible, says food, drink and independent retail expert Tanny Gill, who is director of cheese and retail at Clarks, and has noticed "tech anxiety" in the sector. "Everyone feels they need tech in the business – the biggest challenge is individuals and management of the companies. If the adaptation of tech is not happening from the people who are going to use it it becomes very difficult – the whole tech journey becomes half-hearted and feels money spent the wrong way. All in all a lot of the artisan sector could benefit from tech in things like machinery, packaging, web, information sharing etc but often the costs are too high for small business to justify. A lot of them often end up spending time and effort in setting up systems and operations but could easily get caught out with lack of qualified manpower who can do both artisan work and tech."

> "As much as tech gives speed and precision to the result, a lot of artisan is about handmade, maturing, working with seasons. Tech cannot change this"

The human touch

This human touch when it comes to artisan food is where its beauty lies, many agree, and tech simply can't replace that. "As much as tech gives speed and precision to the result, a lot of artisan is about handmade, maturing, working with seasons. Tech cannot change this," adds Gill. For Michael Price, it's about realising that there is a time and place for tech. "You can't fully automate artisan food," he says. "Traditional methods are what make our products tastier and create huge differences between those that are mass made and rushed by machines. In my view, using the word 'artisan' should be like the legalities on product labels surrounding a label on a jar of jam, or claiming a product has health benefits or is all natural. The same should apply for claiming to be artisan. Checks need putting in place to ensure there's a skilled person trained in the art and not a huge stack of machinery that runs automated processes, then claiming it's artisan on the jar. It not only deceives customers, but also detracts from the skill and passion of those of us that are hands-on and skilled in what we do."

Broughton agrees. Tech may be invaluable for some aspects of her business, but for others it's the traditional approach that makes it what it is. "Tech is very important to us for the stock and despatch part of the process so that it is slick and without errors. The process in which we make our chocolates is handmade and will always be that way – it's part of the major USP of our designs and chocolates." Her advice to other businesses? "Use tech where it's required – don't assume all aspects of your business need it."

COMMENTATORS



NICK GILLETT
MANGROVE UK



SAM JEVEONS
NUSA CANA



ISABELLE HEFFORD
DRIFT DRINKS



ALICE BAKER
MINTEL



DAWN DAVIES
THE WHISKY EXCHANGE



LAURA WILLOUGHBY
CLUB SODA



GARETH BATH
DISTILL VENTURES



THAT'S THE SPIRIT

From ready-to-drink to alcohol-free, the spirits and mixers category has been well and truly shaken this year

While a great number of sectors in the food and drink market has felt the impact of the Covid pandemic, arguably few were hit quite as hard as the spirits category. With pubs and bars being closed the hospitality industry got a kick in the shins that it's only now recovering from, while retailers revelled in the rush of customers looking to create their favourite tipples at home. New formats such as DIY cocktail letterbox kits and monthly memberships blossomed, and undoubtedly the ready-to-drink (RTD) sector got a boost too.

Bringing the party home

A newfound thirst for knowledge from discerning customers was a boon for independents and producers of quality spirits alike. "Consumers displayed an insatiable thirst for drinks education and information during the lockdown period, emerging with an appetite for more premium spirits, exciting mixers and a willingness to mix drinks at home," Nick Gillett, managing director of Mangrove UK, observed.

Indeed, according to Sam Jeveons, co-founder of Indonesian rum brand Nusa Cana, the pandemic has raised the bar when it comes to entertaining at home. "Consumers are taking on the knowledge they learned in lockdown, via at-home tastings, tutorials, Instagram Lives and YouTube videos, and are now sharing it with friends and family – there is a real buzz around making and sharing drinks together." In fact, the very nature of at-home drinking has evolved over the past couple of years, he says. "At-home drinking is evolving from learning and preparing at home for the household to hosting and sharing those drinks, through to hybrid nights with drinks in the home before heading out to a venue."

It's not only knowledge around how to serve drinks that shoppers are thirsty for in 2022; it's the story behind the products themselves, too. "Customers are more conscious than ever of what they are consuming. We are often asked 'How is it made?', 'What's the origin of the drink?', 'Are the ingredients sustainably sourced?'," says Isabelle Hefford, founder of Drift Drinks. "Consumers want and deserve transparency."

Global pressures impact spirits sector

Of course, there are wider-reaching forces at play when it comes to the recent reshaping of the spirits sector. "There's no doubt that global pressures and the pandemic have drastically altered the landscape of the spirits industry in terms of supply, innovation and pricing," says Nick. While undoubtedly presenting a challenge to producers and distributors, this could lead to a subtle benefit for indie retailers if they choose to focus on smaller-scale and local spirits producers. "We are seeing the inevitable increase in prices as the costs spiral in the supply chain," he continues. "At the very least this will cause an evaluation of long held consumer price points but also offer a far wider range of quality products from local producers who may not incur some of the larger shipping increases, for example. "Supply disruptions mean that independent retailers may not be able to offer their customers consistent stock levels which provides an opportunity to educate consumers potentially looking to trade up."

What to invest in now

Gin has ruled drinks cabinets across the UK for years, and while quality gin – especially those boasting interesting stories and combinations of botanicals – will always have a place in the discerning drinker's arsenal, there are other categories now coming to the fore.

"Gin has enjoyed a meteoric rise in recent years, however, 2021 saw volume sales slip," explains Alice Baker, senior research analyst at Mintel. "This was mainly due to the steep fall in on-trade sales in the first half of the year due to the closure of the hospitality sector. Also, as with RTDs, poor weather in spring/summer 2021 reduced drinking occasions for gin."

"We are seeing consumers switch to alternative categories such as rum, mezcal and tequila," explains Nick. "Sales of all variants of tequila are through the roof, with premium and prestige tequilas leading the way, but I think the flavoured tequila market might be poised to explode."

According to Dawn Davies, head buyer at The Whisky Exchange, "rum, mezcal and whisky are the hot tickets at the moment," but she advises that "any independent retailer should look at balance in their range and what their customers are looking for depending on where they are."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the weather plays a role in the spirits-shopping habits of consumers. "White spirits have a strong bias in their usage towards the warmer months, while 65% of category drinkers/buyers drink white spirits/RTDs more in the summer than in the winter," explains Alice.

The rise of ready-to-drink

RTD has been a success story of the past couple of years, and as consumers are getting out and about – and taking their food and drink with them – it's another area of the sector worth spending time exploring.

"RTDs continued their strong growth in 2021, outperforming all other segments in terms of percentage growth with the exception of tequila/mezcal," begins Mintel's Alice. "The rise of the RTD sector is fast and furious," agrees Nick, "and as one of the fastest growing alcohol categories this isn't going to stop. The original RTD experience was one of mass production of cheap and cheerful

HOW TO SELL SPIRITS AND MIXERS



Experts advise that personal connection and experience are key

According to Alice Baker, senior research analyst at Mintel, "A friend/family recommendation would make 32% of category buyers choose one white spirit over another," demonstrating that word of mouth is a valuable tool for sales – and one which independents can readily cash in on.



Tasting sessions are also key. "People love to taste and this is the best tool to use where you can," says Dawn Davies, head buyer at The Whisky Exchange. "If not, a simple serve suggestion with a display can spark someone's imagination. People buy with their eyes so visual merchandising is really important."

TREND SPOTLIGHT



RTDs have their appeal as drinks to grab and go, but when stocking them consider wider consumer trends, advises Nick Gillett of Mangrove UK

- The taste for adventure – we seek new flavours, new moments to remember
- A focus on health and wellness, particularly for specific dietary requirements such as vegan
- An increasing interest in sustainability, authenticity and provenance
- Mindful drinking – with one in five people opting for low and no alcohol options
- Impact of social media and the need for instagrammable gratification
- Premiumisation – focusing on flavour profiles which are harder to replicate at home, or using ingredients that are less common in-store, will be key and increase consumer interest
- Those that can effectively tackle the calorie content with the double burden of alcohol and sugar will stand out from the pack

products, but with the rapid expansion in the category there is now a polarising effect, with some pre-batch high quality cocktails being created at one end and at the other a more fun approach."

The lower unit price and alcohol levels are aiding sales of RTD products, according to Alice. "Consumers are economising during the ongoing period of inflation and income squeeze, and there is also a consumer trend towards alcohol moderation, hence RTDs' future market share is expected to increase in the coming years," she says.

Helpfully, the move towards RTD fits neatly with another growing segment: low/no alcohol drinks. "There are lots more RTDs in the alcohol-free space and they are really popular, especially for summer picnics and parties," begins Laura Willoughby MBE, founder of Club Soda. "They are also a great introduction for many people new to alcohol-free drinks. Providing a range of pre-mixed cocktails, perfect serves and even sparkling wines makes it easier to accommodate for everyone at party at a reasonable price point and they are really easy to pick up from the fridge on the go."

The future of spirits and mixers

Quality is king when it comes to consumers' thirst for spirits and mixers going forward, with one in three (33%) consumers regarding high quality ingredients as a key attribute for white spirits, and 79% of RTD drinkers/buyers choosing a pre-mixed alcoholic drink made with a high quality mixer over a low quality one according to Mintel.

> When non-alc spirits initially hit the shelves several years ago they were considered straight spirit replacements for non-drinkers, but as the category evolved we saw further exploration of flavour as curious consumers sought more experimentation

While 'normality' may have returned, some pandemic-era trends are sticking fast. "At-home mixology has proven popular, with 29% of people reporting to make cocktails at home more often now than before the outbreak," says Alice.

Another Covid trend set to stay the course is the heightened desire for drinks which benefit individuals' health – both physical and mental. "As consumers are becoming more aware of their physical and mental health needs, they are keen to find products that balance this with their desire for complex flavour experiences," says Gareth Bath, European managing director at Distill Ventures. "It's a nascent space, but functional drinks could have the potential to meet this demand and shift the non-alc space into all areas of consumers' lifestyles."

For Dawn, a bit of creativity is necessarily on the cards for the spirits and mixers market. "Mixers need to evolve away from being reliant on the G&T serve which many are starting to do; they need to evolve. The spirits category needs to go back to focusing on quality and condensing ranges, not releasing 100 flavours or styles but doing core well. "

Low ABV, high opportunity

While the proportion of UK shoppers solely consuming 0% alcohol spirits is in the minority, that's not to say that low/no drinks are a niche product. In fact, more consumers than ever are opting for a combination of conventional alcoholic beverages and non-alcoholic ones as they become increasingly conscious of their health – and alcohol's impact on it.

"There has been a significant shift in consumer habits towards health and moderation, which has accelerated the low/no sector from fruit juices and sodas to premium, crafted drinks with complex flavour profiles," says Isabelle. "You can now get replicates of well-known and loved alcoholic beverages in flavour, but are lower-calorie and don't leave you with a hangover the next morning – consumers are driving the demand of wanting drinks that deliver more, whether they mimic the taste of alcohol or provide specific health benefits."

Again, Covid has played a role. "Throughout lockdowns, the demand for alcohol-free continued to grow. Availability and visibility of great tasting products has been key to growing social acceptance of having an alcohol-free drink in a social setting where you would have normally drunk alcohol. This includes at home!," explains Laura.

"Alcohol-free spirits are one of the fastest growing segments and producers are using new techniques to pack alcohol-free versions of tequila, gin, rum and whisky with depth of flavour and bite," she continues. "Consumers love products with active ingredients that promise a feeling. I think we will see more of this going forward, alongside mimics of spirits, like the range the brand Lyre's offers, to provide a direct swap in popular cocktails. Just like alcoholic spirts there is something for everyone – there are some amazing craft distillers using local products and ancient production techniques to make beautiful drinks."

"When non-alc spirits initially hit the shelves several years ago they were considered straight spirit replacements for non-drinkers, but as the category evolved we saw further exploration of flavour as curious consumers sought more experimentation," explains Gareth Bath. "This led to the development of more non-alc offerings – such as aperitifs – that were suited to all manner of occasions.

"Now, in 2022, non-alc spirits are more mainstream than ever, and following six years of innovation, distinct zero proof categories have emerged, including: direct spirit replacements; distilled botanicals, dark spirits, aperitifs and digestifs, RTDs and products developed with functional ingredients."

According to IWSR's No- and Low-Alcohol Strategic Study 2022, the category is projected to have a compound annual growth rate of 8% from 2021 to 2025, adding 126.4 million cases globally, meaning low/no is here to stay.

"This is a really exciting time for the sector," says Gareth, and by carefully crafting a well-balanced offering, indies can cash in.

THE **NO-** AND **LOW-ALCOHOL** CATEGORY IS **PROJECTED** TO HAVE A **COMPOUND** ANNUAL **GROWTH** RATE OF **8%** FROM **2021** TO **2025**, ADDING **126.4 MILLION** CASES GLOBALLY

SOURCE: IWSR'S NO- AND LOW-ALCOHOL STRATEGIC STUDY 2022

STOCK CHECK



EASY MIXT
EasyMixt balances sweet, citrus, salt and bitter flavours, offering a unique solution to cocktail making at home.
easymixt.com



BAX BOTANICALS ZINGY LEMON VERBENA & TONIC
Subtle mint, fennel and florals create a real summer meadow experience.
baxbotanics.com



ISLE OF BARRA ISLAND DARK RUM
Carrageen seaweed infused alongside coconut, cardamon, cloves, lemon and orange peel.
isleofbarradistillers.com



BOBBY'S GIN & PINK LEMONADE
A distinctive combination of fresh, citrussy, spicy and rose flavours which complement the gin's 'Eastern' notes.
bobbysdrygin.com



NUSA CANA SPICED RUM
An Indonesian-inspired blend of nutmeg, clove, cacao, coffee, ginger and pineapple.
nusacana.com



MIJENTA TEQUILA
A super-premium spirit that is carefully crafted with a commitment to environmental sustainability and support for its local community.
shopmijenta.co.uk



MARLISH DISTILLER'S CHOICE TONIC WATER
Uniquely pure tasting with subtle and supportive citrus notes that are perfectly balanced by natural quinine.
marlish.co.uk



LA MORTICIENNE LEMONADE
Artisanal French lemonades made with local spring water, pure cane sugar and natural flavours.
empirebespokefoods.com



BLOODY BENS BLOODY MARY MIX
A mix of 22 herbs and spices that allows people at home to make the best Bloody Mary quicker.
bloodybens.com



HAMPTON COURT GIN THE SIX WIVES GIN
A combination of Spanish oranges, English thyme, juniper, bitter almond, cubeb pepper and grains of paradise.
hamptoncourtgin.com



FINAL CALL

As I write this column, prime minister Boris Johnson has just announced he will be stepping down in the autumn, after a series of cabinet resignations yesterday. With food inflation reportedly set to hit 15% this summer, a litre of fuel costing almost £2, and the war in Ukraine still raging on, whoever steps up to the plate in October will have a mountain to climb.

But before today's announcement, the news on everyone's lips was the government's new Food Strategy, which fell short for the wider food industry, not just fine food retail. Many of Henry Dimbleby's recommendations were bypassed, and the white paper did little to introduce policies to help struggling families or fix the unsustainable food system. But it did make a clear statement to champion British farming and focus on increasing our domestic food production, which has become progressively more important since the Ukraine crisis.

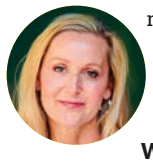
There is some good news, as British cheesemakers Long Clawson Dairy brought home the Supreme Cheese Champion trophy for the country at the International Cheese and Dairy Awards. Facing cheesemakers from across the world, Long Clawson has proved that British cheesemaking is to be revered, and can stand up to the greats from the Continent. Of course, we all knew this – there's something truly special about British cheese. But to have our produce recognised on an international scale is truly a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day.

Working on this issue has got me into the festive spirit earlier than ever – and I've worked in retail! Is it wrong to be looking forward to cosy evenings and drinking hot chocolate with a warm mince pie in July?

As we embark on the next few months of political, financial and social uncertainty, make sure to keep doing what indie retailers do best, and make every moment special for your customers. After all, we could all use a friendly face and comforting smile now and again.

We love hearing from our readers. Do you have a story to share or expertise to pass on? Please get in touch with us via victoria.smith@aceville.co.uk

5 MINUTES WITH
NICCI CLARK, FOUNDER OF RE:NOURISH



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
I would be running a reflexology practice. I believe prevention is better than treatment, and Eastern medicine and their whole philosophy of the body really works for me. Your body speaks to you and sends you messages every single day. Listen to it, never take it for granted and feed it well.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
Critical care nurse, which really opened my eyes to the importance of eating nutritious food and compelled me to start a brand that would make a difference to the nation's health.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
Four months as a chalet girl when I was 25. It was complete chaos running a 10-person 5* chalet on a job sabbatical. Running a 10-bedded CCU was a lot easier!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
When our souperstar consumers email or tag us in Instagram posts sharing love for our Re:Nourish soups. No better feeling. That and new product development.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
New launches and tight launch dates!

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
The food industry is such a fascinating topic not just in the UK but globally. This is a very challenging time for all food and drink brands, and I feel there will be many brands that will not withstand these challenging times of price rises, logistic increases and raw ingredient shortages – not forgetting increased labour costs. I love being part of the industry and all the exciting challenges and opportunities it brings – including finding new ways to disrupt the soup industry in particular, and bring badass goodness to our customers at great value.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
Macaroni cheese cooked by chef Tom Aitken.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
Trust your instinct.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
When I was in Japan, they served some pretty unmentionable delicacies...

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
The Untethered Soul by Michael Singer.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Savoury!

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The next issue of Speciality Food includes:

- Speciality & Fine Food Fair Preview
- Christmas Puddings and Fruit Cakes
- Christmas Cheese
- Chutneys & Pickles
- Christmas Drinks
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Published by
Aceville Publications Ltd,
21-23 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Road,
Colchester, Essex, CO2 8JY

Next issue available:
September 2022

Subscriptions
01293 312188
specialityfood@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk

BAR rate UK £29.25.
Overseas £40.00
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TRIED & TESTED



HOPE & ARLEY ROASTED & SALTED PISTACHIO NUT BUTTER

As a self-confessed pistachio nut (pun intended), I was delighted to discover Hope & Arley. As well as offering snack-sized portions of nuts and classic Pistachio Nut Butter, they supply this: an all-natural flavour punch ideal for pistachio lovers. It's deliciously versatile, too - made from just roasted pistachios, Greek sea salt and lemon juice, it's delicious in sweet as well as savoury dishes.

hopeandarley.com



SHWEN SHWEN MANGO SUNSHINE

With summer well and truly in full swing, we're all on the lookout for drinks that both quench our thirst and offer a taste sensation. Thankfully, Shwen Shwen's Mango Sunshine is here to do just that. A flavour explosion of mango with a twist of lemon, it's just as delicious served on its own over ice as it is muddled into a DIY tequila cocktail with a spritz of lime.

shwenshwen.com



NOJO TERIYAKI SAUCE

As someone who eats some form of Asian-inspired noodle dish at least once a week, this sweet, savoury and slightly spicy sauce stands out as a real flavour sensation. It makes the perfect marinade for any protein, from tofu to beef, to really make dishes sing. What's more, NOJO is B-corp certified, meaning the brand is socially and environmentally positive, and its vibrant, fully recyclable packaging jumps off the shelf.

nojolondon.co.uk

THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Aiden Blakely-May, head chef, Rastella



We are based in the beautiful Cornish town of Falmouth. I was born here in 1993 and my primary school is literally opposite the hotel. It's kind of a full circle moment for me coming back here as head chef. The hotel is located in the centre of Falmouth and only a quick 10-minute walk away from the neighbouring beaches. We incorporate Cornwall into our menus in a big way. Everything is sourced from my home county. If we can't source a product from here, we will not use it, or we will come up with a fermentation method to make such ingredients Cornish instead.

Cornwall is famous for its incredible seafood offering. It is utterly world-class. What I love about our coasts here in Cornwall is the variety of produce. Fresh fish is in abundance and every now and then you get some special surprises. For example, a couple of months ago my scallop fisherman text me one night about something truly special. "Aiden would you like some Cornish langoustines?" I couldn't believe it. In the 10 years (on and off) I've worked in Cornwall, I've never seen Cornish langoustines. They were the most beautiful langoustines I've ever tasted. These kinds of discoveries inspire me and the team to do our absolute best with amazing ingredients, day in and day out.

I am so lucky to have a bounty of local suppliers who supply me with the very best of Cornish produce. In the last four years, I have developed firm relationships with some of the best veg growers and producers on the land. Soul Farm, Trenow Fields, Patricks Patch and Rob from Zucca Farm to name a few. They all practice regenerative sustainable methods when growing, no-dig and no sprays. A much harder and longer way of growing produce, but the flavour difference is huge. The way these farms support local ecology ties in with my Cornish ethos. They are regenerating soil minerals and building diverse habitats whilst producing very high-quality food. It's a topic I'm learning more about myself and something very important to me.

What is great is that all of my suppliers grow something different. They all text or email me a list every week of what's available and at its best. I then plan out what we want and start thinking about how the menu will look that week. I send my order to them; the produce then gets picked that morning and brought straight over. Super fresh. I've even gone to pick up the veg myself when they're too busy! Over the course of the year, we receive spring onions, garlic, onions, cauliflower, squash, all types of brassicas, fennel, courgettes, tomatoes, beetroot, carrots, parsnips, edible flowers, asparagus, potatoes, every variety of herb, berries, grapes, the best salad and even lemons! The list really is endless. I'm also always happy to receive a large volume of produce. This allows me to preserve it in some way so when we go into the hunger gap, we have local produce still ready to fire away. I'm very lucky to have made great friends with these incredible producers, it makes my job a dream.

> "I am so lucky to have a bounty of local suppliers who supply me with the very best of Cornish produce"

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Garofalo



BALANCING INNOVATION WITH TRADITION IN ITALIAN CUISINE

Do consumers want a modern twist on their Italian fare, or do they prefer classic flavours?

Italian cuisine is synonymous with tradition, and home recipes are passed down through countless generations, from one nonna to the next.

There's nothing better than a Margherita pizza or a simple yet stunning cacio e pepe – and a Caprese salad made with the finest Mozzarella, the freshest tomatoes and basil and a drizzle of top-quality, authentic olive oil is second to none. Often, the simplest recipes are the best – they are classic dishes for a reason, after all.

But with innovation ripe in the food sector and the younger generation driving key trends such as flexitarianism and hyper-convenience, should retailers be refreshing their Italian offerings to reflect the trends?

We believe that traditional Italian products will always have pride of place on retailers' shelves, from carefully crafted pasta to unbeatable PDO products, such as Parmigiano Reggiano or Proscuitto di Parma. That's because we know the time, care and craft that go into such products, and their commitment to tradition brings a level of provenance that will lift any dish.

However, we also have a soft spot for innovation, and we have to admit, some of us love pineapple on pizza. Home cooking saw a huge spike in 2020-21 as aspiring foodies spent time making meals from scratch and experimenting with new flavours and cuisines. In fact, retailers noticed at-home pizza oven sales soaring, bought by consumers keen to explore the breadth and depth of their cooking abilities. There were surely some failed attempts, but a burnt crust never hurt anyone – just don't tell any Italians!

This balance between tradition and innovation is what keeps our industry so fresh and exciting, and keeps consumers coming back to fine food retail for more. But it also keeps indies firmly rooted in the rich culinary history of Italy, which is a glorious place to be.

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



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