speciality foodmagazine.com

July/August 2023 £3.25

# SPECIALITY FOOD

CONNECTING THE FINE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY




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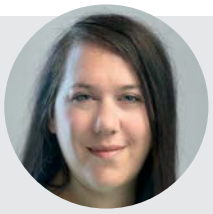








## EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the July/August edition of *Speciality Food*. I was delighted recently to join the team for a year while editor Holly enjoys her next big role – motherhood. It's brilliant to be working day-in day-out with colleagues and clients who share my huge passion for all things food and drink. Was I lured to the role on the promise of oodles of cheese? Absolutely, and it was with great excitement that I donned a white coat and spent a day at this year's International Cheese and Dairy Awards as a judge. Not only was it a fantastic opportunity for this foodie to sample lots of cheese, but I met so many fantastic producers, with amazing stories to tell. In this edition we highlight some of the big winners from the event in Stafford. And we throw a bigger light on the industry as a whole in our special Cheese Report. We're also happy to bring you the latest *Snack Buyer* supplement, and a bumper *Directory* - both jam-packed with inspiration.

**CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS** | EDITOR (MATERNITY COVER)
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# Embrace the organic opportunity this September

Interest in organic food and drink is on the rise, and indies have a key window to reach more customers next month

Despite the cost-of-living crisis, shoppers are continuing to make environmentally friendly food choices in 2023, and seeking out sustainably sourced products on a more regular basis.

As Steven Jacobs, business development manager at Organic Farmers & Growers (OF&G), explained, "Consumers are increasingly looking for ways to 'make a difference' with their purchase choices, and 'organic' is widely recognised, valued and trusted. It is critical that the organic sector continues to invest in a consistent and unified message to communicate the value and benefits of the word 'organic'."

The Soil Association Certification's Organic Market Report 2023, revealed that the UK's organic market is now worth a record £3.1 billion, driven by 1.6% growth in sales in 2022, with shoppers spending almost £8.5 million on organic products every single day.

"The research is clearly showing that consumers are increasingly motivated by their desire to choose sustainable products which make a real difference – and organic consumers are shopping more often, more ethically and more locally," Niamh Noone, senior marketing manager at the Soil Association, told *Speciality Food*.

According to Steven, "Independent retailers can capitalise on this by considering the number of growing eco-active consumers who value and trust organic beyond its perceived premium price point. These people are actively seeking guaranteed assurances about the integrity of the food they are buying.

"We know that typically organic shoppers will spend more per basket than non-organic and invariably on higher value items. By promoting organic products, farm shops can encourage these shoppers instore and drive overall margins."

## An opportunity for indies

This year marks five decades of organic certification, and as independent retailers are champions of the organic movement, this offers a unique opportunity across the country to really celebrate and pull focus during September.

Due to their unique ability to communicate with customers, unlike most multiples, the month presents fine food shops with a specific, dedicated window to share the great stories of their suppliers and champion the ethical credentials that underpin organic food and drink.

"Messaging around organic's assurance and integrity appeals to consumers who are invested in quality, nutritious food that is produced with consideration for the environment and animal welfare," Steven explained.

Indeed, as Emma Mosey, owner of Yolk Farm and Minskip Farm Shop and chair of the Farm Retail Association, told *Speciality Food*,

"Even if we are not farming organically, we might sell produce that is organic, and can use our excellent reputations for honesty and transparency to highlight this to the consumers in store."

As 2023 is significant for the Organic September campaign, the Soil Association is poised to shout even louder, raising awareness of the role farming and our food systems play in the climate and nature crisis, and prompt reappraisal of organic as a solution.

According to Niamh, "Organic September is the perfect opportunity for independent food retailers to combine forces with farmers and brands to shout loud and proud about the benefits of organic for climate, nature and health."

## Promoting organic

There are plenty of resources for farm shops, delis and food halls to use to help boost awareness and sales during the month of September.

The Soil Association has a new Visual Merchandising Guide written specifically for independent retailers to help create compelling displays and points of interest within their shops, ideal for training new staff or ensuring shelves and counters are always kept fresh and appealing. The material includes how to cross-sell and attract more customers, using the organic message.

One independent retailer that certainly makes use of these is Yolk Farm and Minskip Farm Shop, as owner Emma explained, "It's great that Organic September often send out marketing materials to be used in store. We can also use social media and email marketing to raise awareness amongst customers and drive footfall."

"There are also some inspiring ideas for your own local PR – engaging with local media to get key messages in the press about organic and how it benefits nature and climate," Niamh added.

"And why not hook up with some of your local organic suppliers and farmers – to invite them in to share their stories with your customers across the month."

Indeed, independent retailers are usually heavily involved with producers. As Steven explained, "One of the strengths of the farm shop sector is the direct relationships that individual retailers have with all of their suppliers.

"This presents a fantastic opportunity for 'meet the maker' events that encourage food and drink producers to speak directly with the community and share their passion and talk about their experiences."



## *"Is too much choice a bad thing?"*



**JOHN SHEPHERD**
PARTRIDGES

I was recently reading that the tasting menu concept in restaurants is making a comeback, especially during the cost-of-living crisis.

This is not surprising really, because rather than offering a variety of different options that may never be consumed, the diner can be steered through a culinary journey at reduced cost.

It has not been greeted positively in all cases. One critic recalled 'being trapped and helpless in the face of a marathon tasting menu'. Another bemoaned them as an 'exhausting to-do list of knackered cliches'.

However, on the rare occasions I have experienced the tasting menu I have actually enjoyed the experience. Freed at last from the tyranny of choice on the long and winding menu, and liberated by the lack of remorse for choosing the wrong dish, I feel they have their place in modern society.

In fact, the financial stability they clearly brought to the smaller catering establishments in recent difficult times was enviously viewed by many.

In this matter there is no retail equivalent of the tasting menu and I have often felt that many delis and speciality food shops use a lot of slow-moving stock as filler space to keep up appearances in different locations around the shelves without offering anything actually...different. Here I am thinking particularly of my own shop! Although one or two others spring to mind, and the occasional food show.

In previous times I came across the work of Signor Vilfredo Pareto, whose writings lead to the creation of the concept known as the Pareto Principle. This principle states that for many outcomes 80% of the consequences come from 20% of the causes. For example, in our field of speciality food this can mean 80% of the sales come from 20% of the products. Or in reverse, 20% of sales come from 80% of the products. Which means that four fifths of all that you see in a food shop sells slowly compared to the profitable one fifth.

It can be applied in other ways too. It has been suggested that 20% of the customers make up 80% of the sales or even, perhaps more fancifully, 20% of the staff make 80% of the shop's output.

But apparently having too much choice is potentially as bad as having too little choice, or as I refer to it 'The Two Bries Factor'. That is offering many different types of the same product without a clearly defined good reason which results in what has been known as the 'paradox of choice'. The problem is not really two Bries, it's offering multiple choice Bries which becomes too confusing.

In his 2004 book called The Paradox of Choice, Barry Schwartz argued that reducing choices in food shops eliminates customer anxiety. The more choices that are being offered paradoxically does not make us benefit psychologically, and hence feel comfortable making a choice. In my experience this occurs particularly in wine departments where numerous bottles of wine offer vast alternatives with little specific information on their style or popularity.

In Partridges we have some 30 to 40 types of olive oil, believe it or not, at many different price points. I do not actually think this increases sales of olive oil overall, apart perhaps from having such a large physical presence and the feel-good factor for the proprietor of offering a lot of choice. We suffer in the same way with tea, sauces and pickles, and biscuits to name a few. Ultimately the contention is that too much choice becomes demotivating to customers and affects sales.

As with so many aspects in life and running small businesses, Channing Pollock's quote 'happiness is a way station between too much and too little' serves as a constant reminder especially when placing orders.

> "In our field of speciality food this can mean 80% of the sales come from 20% of the products. Or, in reverse, 20% of sales come from 80% of the products. Which means that four fifths of all that you see in a food shop sells slowly compared to the profitable one fifth"

# A guide to stocking and selling alcohol-free beer



**Contrary to many preconceptions, alcohol-free beer has become a real drinking trend in the UK. Find out how to cash in on its popularity**

By 2024, the global non-alcoholic beer market is poised to surpass $25B, according to Global Market Insights, with 8% annual growth. On the other hand, traditional beer sales are only expected to climb by 1.8%.

## What is alcohol-free beer?

Alcohol-free beer has little to no alcohol content, and aims to replicate the taste of traditional beer while eliminating the inebriating effects of standard alcoholic brews.

In the UK, there are currently no laws on the alcoholic content of low and no-alcohol beers, simply guidelines. 'Alcohol-free' is applied to any beverage that is up to 0.05% ABV (alcohol by volume). "So even those cans that say 0% are probably up to 0.05% abv," advises Laura Willoughby, co-founder of Club Soda.

Meanwhile, 'dealcoholised' beer applies to anything up to 0.5% ABV, and it's not uncommon to see both 'alcohol-free' and '0.5%' on a product. "0.5% is considered alcohol-free nearly the rest of the world over," notes Laura. Finally, 'low alcohol' is used for drinks with no more than 1.2% abv.

## How to stock alcohol-free beer

Almost nine million UK adults planned to take part in Dry January 2023, and with 70% of those who took part still drinking less many months later, stocking alcohol-free drinks can be a year-round sales booster for retailers.

While stocking low and no can feel like a challenge, there are plenty of high-quality options for fine food and drink retailers to champion.

Luke Boase, founder of Lucky Saint, told *Speciality Food* that stocking premium alcohol-free options is important for independent retailers 365 days a year.

"Taste trumps everything. If you're doing Dry January, or if you're just cutting down on alcohol in general, you still deserve a great tasting drink," he said. "So, when we look for an alcohol-free option, we're going to go with the one which gives us the best experience.

"Retailers who focus on quality alcohol-free drinks are going to do better than those who see it as a gimmick for Dry January. Especially with the move towards a 'sober curious' lifestyle that so many people are making."

Here are some of our favourite quality alcohol-free beers to stock:

- Lucky Saint Unfiltered Lager 0.5%
- Days Pale Ale 0.0%
- Big Drop Pine Trail Pale Ale 0.5%
- Jump Ship Flying Colours 0.5%
- Freestar Prime Time Alcohol-Free Lager 0.5%
- Fungtn Lion's Mane IPA 0.5%
- Nirvana Bavarian Helles Lager 0.5%



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# 5 US food trends that could be on their way to Britain

**We round up insight from North America's largest speciality food event, Summer Fancy Food Show. What's hot off the production line and ready to wow customers?**

### 1 A TASTE OF ITALY

Television trends often tend to influence food habits – just look at the recent rise of retro puddings here in the UK. In the States, the popularity of White Lotus has sparked a taste for quality Italian fare, from premium pastas to accessible, authentic ingredients from abroad. Innovation is also happening in America's Italian food sector, with organic pasta brand Sfoglini producing two new pasta shapes, quattrotini and vesuvio, that it was selling at the show.

### 2 DIVERSITY OF FLAVOUR

Flavours from beyond the country's borders are gaining ground in the States. Exhibitors from Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and elsewhere were showcasing their products, from lentil-based dips to ever-popular bubble tea. The show also featured a Diversity Pavilion including BIPOC-founded companies.

### 3 THOUGHTFUL NO AND LOW ALCOHOL

Alcohol-free beers and cocktail replacements were on the menu, according to the show's trend-spotter panellists. Melanie Bartelme, associate director and global food analyst at Mintel, said consumers in the US are taking a 'flexitarian' approach to drinking alcohol. "Maybe they don't want to have that second [alcoholic] drink, but they want to drink something that feels as special as getting a cocktail," she said during the panel. "There has been growth in the thoughtfulness of this process and the way these beverages are being made."

### 4 ALL NATURAL

Americans are known for their sweet tooth, but is that changing? Trend-spotters also recognised more products were being sweetened naturally. They pointed to date-sweetened barbecue sauce or Maury's Hive Tea, which includes granulated honey in its tea bags to give consumers the option to control the level of sweetness. As Mintel's Melanie told Bloomberg, the show also saw more brands moving away from keto and other diets, preferring a natural approach to health. The simpler the product, the better, consumers seem to be saying.

### 5 WEIRD, WILD AND WONDERFUL

From cocktails made with Urbani Truffles' truffle vanilla and hibiscus syrup to AI-created hot sauce called Chil-AI by Dave's Gourmet, there were plenty of eye-catching products for showgoers to experience. Other notable mentions include Antarctic Krill Meat, which claims to be set to revolutionise the wellness industry with its protein-packed product, and 'Whale Sperm Tortillas' from Vegan Rob's.

# Do shoppers trust British supermarkets?

**A recent survey by Which? shows consumers' confidence in supermarkets is at an all-time low – this presents an opportunity for fine food retailers.**

According to Which?'s monthly consumer insight tracker, trust in the grocery industry dropped in the middle of 2023 to the lowest point since November 2014.

This comes as a separate nationally representative Which? survey of over 2,000 UK adults found that two-thirds (67%) feel supermarkets are ripping people off in the cost-of-living crisis.

### AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIES

As supermarket prices remain high, despite slowing inflation. "We should not be surprised if the general public are losing trust in the large supermarkets," said Andrew Goodacre, CEO at the British Independent Retail Association (BIRA) recently.

"We know that the rate of inflation has fallen and yet the consumer inflation keeps rising whilst senior directors earn big bonuses. The so-called lag between supplier prices falling and consumer prices falling seems a flimsy argument."

This has presented independent retailers with an opportunity to offer quality and value to consumers who have lost trust in using their usual grocery haunts.

As Tina McKenzie, policy and advocacy chair at the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), told *Speciality Food*, "This data opens a window of opportunity for independent food retailers.

"Their trump card lies in the personalised touch and community spirit they offer, a luxury not afforded to larger establishments. As the modern consumer craves a deeper understanding of their food's journey, independent retailers are perfectly placed to satiate their appetite. Their tight-knit relationship with local suppliers allows them to paint a compelling 'farm to fork' story.

"In a climate of growing consumer scepticism, small businesses have the potential to emerge as a beacon of reliability and quality in the food and retail industry."

### OFFERING QUALITY AND VALUE

To do this, independent shops need to provide an alternative to what's on offer at supermarkets.

As Toby Edwards, deli manager at Friday Street Farm Shop, explained, "Being in the middle of the cost-of-living crisis now, a lot of us are shopping with quality in mind. But with this distrust of the supermarkets and the feel that they are ripping customers off, we can show that you can spend the same or even less with us and receive a higher quality product, whether that be meat, fruit, veg and cheese."

"We can showcase the high-quality food and reasonable prices that we have and still compete with the supermarkets and their prices."

Andrew agreed, "Independent retailers earn trust by always treating customers fairly. They are local shops and if they lose trust, they lose the right to trade. Now is the time for independent food shops to remind customers of the value they offer and the support they give to their local communities every day.

"Our customers are looking for quality produce, local produce and fair prices so it is essential to keep that message clear along with excellent customer service," Simon Jones, owner of Forest Deli, added.






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## *"Is it time to adopt 'pineapple design thinking'?"*



**STEFANO CUOMO**
MACKNADE

I have been enjoying the blistering heat of Southern England. But, with temperatures over and above anything the Med is able to offer, there is always that sense of foreboding, suggesting the inevitable hose pipe bans, manifesting how this weather is part of a global shift.

As a cup half full kind of a guy, I hunt down the silver linings.

In this instance, it is the quality of Kentish wine.

It is not just the quality, but the sheer the number of vineyards bursting onto the scene (we have our French 'cousins', in the shape of Taittinger, investing heavily not five minutes from Macknade) that is impressive.

Whilst to some this is the 'canary in the mine', from another angle it is a wonderful counterbalance, illustrating the ingenuity and skill set found across our agricultural sector here in the Garden of England, which is reflective of the importance of farming to us as a nation, adapting to and innovating through truly challenging times.

Thinking about innovation often takes us down a digital pathway to the altar of the 'tech gods', and catching a recent discussion on 'pineapple design' was so simply satisfying.

The idea of 'design thinking' in solving problems is something I am hearing more and more about, and it is exciting.

The beauty of this process is it is simple, provides immediate impact and is open to all. Its biggest barrier is so often cultural norms, apathy and the safety of status quo.

What blew my mind was that pineapple producers stopped, looked at how they could make savings and lower the impact of their fruit (particularly when considering the need for global export) and redesigned their approach, chopping off the pineapple crown (leaves).

Of course the pineapple, and its very proud crown, have all manner of symbolic significance to us British consumers.

Perhaps, most of all, the aesthetically pleasing green leaves, sitting proudly above the textured body of the fruit, shouting 'tropical', far-away places, sunshine, relaxation, and good times, are a hugely important part of the pineapple 'logo'... the marketing department so to speak.

But chopping them off got rid of waste at source and created economic value (the fibres could be processed en masse). The lower weight led to slashed emission in transport as less space was required for more fruit, reducing impact through less packaging. The panacea of delivering lower wastage and higher margins was then achieved!

The downside? How do we sell the tropical promise of a pineapple without its bold green crest?

And that is where design thinking has to work hand in hand with status quo culture-busting – setting out a brave new future of what the visual impact of the pineapple can really mean to us.

On buying a pineapple, I am drawn by its colours and textures. But once home and ready to eat it, my first step is to thwack off the crown, cut off the peel, and enjoy that rich sweet flesh. I don't need the crown. It adds nothing more than a perceived value.

If we are able to manage our cultural expectations and traditions (often based on no logical reasoning) and address them with a clarity aligned to actually improving our world whilst losing none of the true satisfaction, then the use of design thinking and reshaping how we live offers truly exciting outcomes for us all.

Hack off those crowns and let the pineapple, in all its crestless glory, be our new symbol of a better thought through world.

> "On buying a pineapple, I am drawn by its colours and textures. But once home and ready to eat it, my first step is to thwack off the crown, cut off the peel, and enjoy that rich sweet flesh. I don't need the crown. It adds nothing more than a perceived value"



# How retailers can be part of the solution to ultra-processed foods

**A recent Panorama documentary exposed the potentially harmful effects of ultra-processed food (UPF), putting the spotlight on what's considered to be an immediate public health emergency.**

However, with the cost-of-living crisis causing consumers to feel both financially and time poor, sales of ultra-processed food are on the rapid rise.

As Mark Kacary, managing director at The Norfolk Deli, explained, "The irony is that we are faced with a 24-hour world where we are expected to be always available, to be always switched on, leaving many people feeling as though there is no time for anything other than 'convenience food' which can be thrown into the microwave and reheated within minutes, tasting as good as the day it was created."

### HOW FINE FOOD RETAIL CAN HELP

Fine food retailers are in a unique position to educate customers about the importance of real food, making the connection between farm and fork.

According to Rob Percival, head of food policy at the Soil Association, "There is plenty that retailers can do to get ahead – independent farm shops and delis are agile enough to switch direction fast – this is an opportunity for them to promote healthy food farmed in nature-friendly ways."

As Mark explained, there are several initiatives farm shops, delis and other independent retailers are already undertaking to champion real food. "Beautiful displays of locally grown fresh vegetables, locally made produce using local ingredients, a proper fish counter, and a meat counter using locally slaughtered meat that isn't imported from countries that are thousands of miles away."

There is a bigger issue at play, though, as Mark added. "The unfortunate thing is that, if your shop is (as is ours) in a small Victorian seaside resort with three mid-sized supermarkets always within one mile of each other, whatever we try, falls on deaf ears.

"We shout loud about the quality of our products, but the price and lack of real alternatives to the power of the supermarket makes us feel a little like King Canute stubbornly trying to change the direction of the tide by will alone."

### THE PROBLEM WITH THE FOOD SYSTEM

According to Rebecca Tobi, senior business engagement manager at The Food Foundation, "Commercial incentives for food businesses favour less healthy foods.

"The greatest profits for food manufacturers lie in the sale of ultra-processed foods which are often high in fat, salt and sugar."

This is the problem fine food retailers face when seeking to champion high-quality real food. As Mark explains, "Listen to the government speak about the food industry and it is clear they champion supermarkets above anybody else.

"Every government talks about how a supermarket can do more to reduce the price of a basket full of shopping. During the pandemic, apart from supermarkets the rest of us who were open and serving the public rarely if ever got a mention.

"The government (red or blue) is to blame. Supermarkets have been allowed to dominate the landscape in a way that is not replicated elsewhere on the continent."



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# Food charity challenges government failure to address sustainability of food system

**Feedback Global took to the Court of Appeal, fighting against government inaction regarding its 2022 Food Strategy**

The charity put forward the case that the government's failure to adopt measures to reduce meat and dairy production and consumption in its Food Strategy published in June 2022 was arguably unlawful.

The Court of Appeal upheld the claim, and a full judicial review hearing will take place in the Court of Appeal this autumn to rule on the legality of the government's Food Strategy.

Speaking about the success of the hearing, Carina Millstone, executive director of Feedback Global, said, "We are thrilled to have won our appeal for a judicial review of the legality of the government's Food Strategy. "When the strategy came out, it was a real disappointment to many, as it failed to address critical issues such as childhood obesity, land use and biodiversity, and of course, the issue of climate change."

## A WIN FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND THE CLIMATE

The livestock industry is reported to be responsible for about 14.5% of global emissions and, if current trends continue, the global livestock industry will be using up almost half the world's 1.5°C emissions budget by 2030. This means tackling emissions from the food and farming sector is key for the government to meet climate targets.

The Net Zero Strategy published in 2021 expressly stated that the Food Strategy would support the delivery of the Net Zero target, outlining how carbon budgets would be met in the food system.

However, the Food Strategy neither addressed the emissions impact of meat and dairy, nor put in place policies for their mitigation.

As Carina explained, "The Climate Change Committee has been very clear that the government must address emissions from food and farming in the transition to a net zero economy, and yet the Food Strategy barely touched on climate change.

"More specifically, it ignored meat and dairy altogether, despite the Climate Change Committee repeatedly saying that a dietary shift away from animal source foods is a particularly important measure to curb emissions and warming. We want the government to listen to its own expert climate advisors, and this must mean some reduction in meat and dairy."

Rob Percival, head of food policy at the Soil Association, agreed, "It is shameful that the government are ignoring the environmental impacts of meat and dairy, disregarding advice from the Climate Change Committee.

"The government should listen to its advisors. While red meat is often in the spotlight, chicken makes up almost half of all meat consumed in the UK.

"Industrially farmed chicken is a major climate issue, due to chemical fertiliser use and habitat destruction abroad which is driven by the production of chicken feed, especially in the Amazon. It also puts a terrible strain on British nature, leaking waste into our troubled rivers."

## LESS BUT BETTER MEAT AND DAIRY

The charity is arguing for a reduction in meat and dairy production to improve sustainability in the food sector, which is good news for independent fine food retailers.

Carina told *Speciality Food*, "It's important to note that this means less and better meat and dairy, not none. "It would make sense to first curb the most environmentally destructive meat and dairy production, especially intensive poultry or pork fed on animal feed linked to deforestation and land use change overseas, rather than smaller scale, high welfare meat and dairy produced as part of agroecological systems."

Rob added, "Government must support a 'less and better' approach to meat and dairy, while also ensuring that farmers are paid properly for nature-friendly farming like organic. We support this legal action from Feedback and call on the government to take urgent action to protect British farming and nature."

As champions of local, environmentally-friendly meat and dairy, farm shops, delis and cheesemongers would benefit from government action to support these sustainable supply chains.

"This will have a positive impact on retailers who are already supporting this approach and mean better-quality produce for shoppers," Rob told *Speciality Food*.





# How indies can help shoppers afford healthy food

**With the cost-of-living crisis still affecting millions of Brits, we explore how independent shops can be part of the solution to affording real food**

After fruit and vegetable shortages across supermarkets earlier this year, and financial pressures making fresh produce less affordable, action needs to be taken on ensuring everyone has access to healthy food.

According to research in October 2022, vegetable sales were down by 9% compared to the previous year. This matches a new survey by YouGov, in which 26% of participants said they had bought fewer fresh vegetables due to various financial pressures at home.

### HOW INDEPENDENT SHOPS CAN HELP CUSTOMERS EAT BETTER

While supermarkets are tied into huge supply chains and inflationary prices from imported produce, independents such as farm shops have the benefit of agile systems that avoid these issues.

Lucy Antal, senior project manager at Feedback Global, told *Speciality Food* that indies should, "Embrace the alternative food networks that are springing up, and source direct from your local producer/grower; re-educate your customer with signposting and information about your suppliers; ensure that you are supporting fair and sustainable food by asking questions about the sourcing of the food you sell.

"Retailers could also suggest budget-friendly healthy recipes to their customers, based on products they have in stock.

"Think about the placing of products within your store, make a point of highlighting the healthier options; train staff to recommend products; stock seasonal fruits and vegetables; consider selling 'wonky' produce at a lower cost alternative or offer a zero-waste 'mystery' bag at a set price.

Orla also suggested that retailers could redeem Healthy Start vouchers. "Families in Greater Manchester, for example, can now use their Healthy Start card to buy fresh fruit and vegetables at award-winning Bury Market. The new initiative aims to help boost market footfall and improve access to healthy food among beneficiaries of the Healthy Start scheme, typically pregnant women and families from low-income backgrounds.

"Most Healthy Start card transactions take place in supermarkets but the local food partnership wants to make the local market appealing to beneficiaries of this scheme, so more money stays in the local economy."

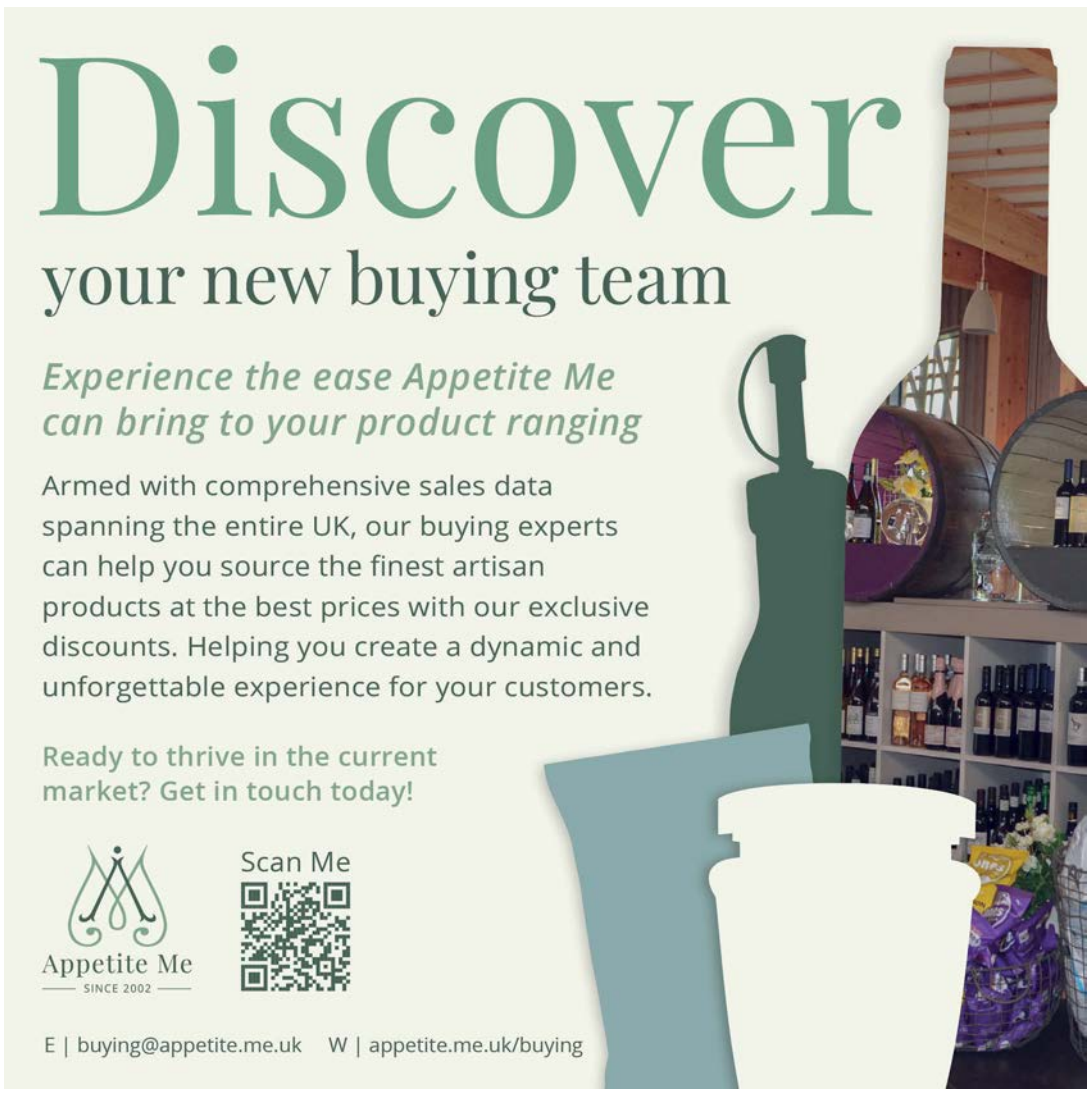
# EU producers are 'not ready' for Brexit import checks

Ministers have been warned that European food producers are "not ready" for UK import checks, which are due to begin later this year, and that their introduction will drive food price inflation.

The controls have already been postponed four times over the past 18 months, because of fears about the potential effect on prices.

From 31st October, any EU business exporting meat or dairy to the UK will need to have an Export Health Certificate (EHC), which needs certifying by an on-site vet. Physical checks at the border will follow in January 2024. This will have a negative impact on trade with the EU, as Shane Brennan, chief executive of the Cold Chain Federation, explained, "If just 10% of what you sell goes to the UK, chances are with the cost dynamics, your rational business decision in that scenario is to stop serving the UK.

"The end result is less choice, less flexibility and higher prices than they would otherwise be at the end of his year."




# THE STORY BEHIND THE STATS

## £31m

The UK government has made £31m available for new equipment and technology to boost farm productivity and increase sustainable food production. "The tremendous interest shown in the FETF 2023 Productivity and Slurry underscores the determination of our farmers to drive ever more productive and sustainable farming practices to keep food on our plates whilst protecting our important landscapes and habitats," commented Thérèse Coffey, secretary of state for food and farming. She added, "By empowering farms to invest cash in new kit, we are ensuring our farmers, growers and foresters have the equipment they need to embrace innovation, protect the environment, and contribute to a thriving and sustainable agricultural sector."

## £315.2b

The total UK food and drink market is predicted to be worth £315.2bn by 2028, experiencing a growth of 19% from 2023 (£265bn), according to a unique new forecast from IGD that presents a combined outlook covering eating in and eating out. Global insight leader at IGD, Bryan Roberts, explained, "Shoppers will continue to maintain a mixed shopping repertoire, prioritising convenience and experience while continuing with some money-saving behaviours that will have become ingrained by this point. While shoppers continue to look for ways to save money, a variety of initiatives such as strong value messaging and loyalty schemes is set to continue in the short-term."

## 55%

According to research from the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), nearly three in five consumers whose household finances have worsened claim they are going to spend less on eating out. Despite this, consumers are still looking to treat themselves, with 55% of shoppers agreeing they would be willing to pay extra for better quality meat. Within pork, the AHDB saw growth among premium products, specifically shoulder roasts, chops, belly and mince. Premium pork cuts may, therefore, offer an opportunity for those who feel the need to trade down protein to save money, but who still want to deliver on the potential of treat meals.

## 57.7%

UK businesses importing food products from the European Union could be forced to raise prices, following the introduction of a 'Brexit tax'. Industry sources have said smaller retailers, specialist food shops and delicatessens that import items such as Parma ham and French cheese will be hit particularly hard by the tax. A UK government spokesperson told *The Observer*, "Growing the economy and supporting small businesses are priorities for this government. The estimated charge of £20 to £43 is an indicative range while we continue to determine the full scale of operating costs and finalise the risk categories under the Target Operating Model."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### RETAILERS TO SUE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT FOR DRS DELAY

Retailers are threatening legal action against the Scottish government after being left "out of pocket" by the latest delay to the deposit return scheme – which will not now begin until October 2025 at the earliest. It is the fourth time the DRS in Scotland has been delayed, and retailers want compensation, having already invested in reverse vending machines where shoppers can return empty containers to get their deposit money on drinks cans and bottles back.

### NEW LABELLING REQUIREMENTS FOR NI 'GREEN LANE'

The UK government has announced new labelling requirements for some food products that move from Great Britain to Northern Ireland through the 'green lane'. The new 'Retail Movement Scheme' will be implemented in three different phases between October 2023 and July 2025. Under this scheme, associated businesses in Great Britain will be required to put the individual product label 'Not for EU', on some food products before moving them through the green lane. The government said that this labelling will ensure that "goods are not moved onwards into the EU".

### AVIAN FLU RISK LEVEL NOW 'LOW'

Following the reduction in risk level to 'low' for all poultry, the national Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) in place across Great Britain was lifted at midday on 4th July 2023, the chief veterinary officer has confirmed. This announcement follows the lifting of mandatory housing measures on 18th April 2023. Dr Christine Middlemiss, the UK's chief veterinary officer, said: "Now we are in the summer months and the risk to poultry across Great Britain has reduced, it is the right time for us to lift the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.
"This would not have been possible without the hard work of keepers, who have upheld high biosecurity standards for many months."

# MEET THE PRODUCER

## From a village hall, to Fortnum & Mason via The Fat Duck – Made for Drink's story is a shining example of how passion can elevate a side hustle to big business

Imagine having the guts to take your side hustle – your first ever food and drink product – to one of the world's leading chefs. A tough gig, right?

It was a risk Dan Featherstone, founder of Made for Drink, was willing to take.

Armed with a special set of skills, honed over years working in the snack industry, Dan took a trio of handmade treats to his local (which just happened to be Heston Blumenthal's The Fat Duck in Bray) in 2016, just hoping they'd like them.

"It turned out to be the best meeting I've ever had. If I could get the snacks legally packaged, they'd trial them," he beams.

Fast-forward to 2023, and business is booming for the artisanal snack company, which recently clinched a collaboration with Stella Artois, creating a specially curated crisp (Smoked Salt & Black Garlic) designed to work in harmony with the iconic Belgian beer. More than 3,000 pubs across the UK are stocking the new product, in a bid to raise £120,000 for charity Hospitality Action.

### Humble beginnings

Being close to the creative process is what inspired Dan to found Made for Drink.

A self-professed 'people person', studying anthropology at university seemed a good fit, but Dan would go on to take a graduate job with PepsiCo at Walkers and Quaker – a baptism of fire.

"I remember on the first day them giving me a call list of 120 corner shops to sell their crisps into. They gave you a van, you'd get your stock, and off you'd go. I'd just finished my Masters, and I turned up wearing a suit in a van in Aldershot. I was like, 'get over yourself mate, get out there and sell crisps!'"

Dan worked around the business, spending his days dreaming about snacks. "It dawned on me, at the time, there was a movement driven by customers who want a better product. Craft beer, and gin were taking off, and bar snacks from the mass market just didn't quite fit."



The seed of an idea nagged at him. "I sat down and wrote a plan for a side hustle. Just for fun," he says.

Around the same time, Dan took his WSET qualifications, learning more about the vital connections between food and drink.

"I loved these little rules, and the idea that food and drink from the same place go brilliantly together."

### Taking a chance

When his initial experiments got the nod from The Fat Duck team, Dan was urged by his local council to take a level three manufacturing exam, and admits he found their support lacking. Down the road in Maidenhead however, was a different ball game. Here he was welcomed to the village hall with open arms, using the kitchens for production, alongside space at Park Royal Food Innovation Centre in London.







Made for Drink officially launched at The Fat Duck on 26th November 2016. A week later they ordered more. Success.

Dan would take days off work to meet the orders in his growing book, including from Fortnum & Mason, where the buying team were blown away by unparalleled interest from customers.

Buoyed by the fruitfulness of his endeavours, Dan took a leap of faith, selling his car, quitting his job, bringing in a business partner, and spending a day driving around Maidenhead looking for a factory. Everything fell into place, with Made for Drink growing 100 % year on year. Until Covid.

### Adapting and evolving

"The factory felt like a war room at the time," he says. "People were calling up overnight to cancel their orders."

A plan was drawn up, pivoting to online and supermarkets from speciality retail, with tremendous support from buyers at Waitrose and Sainsbury's, who agreed short payment terms and even prime promotion space. "I'm so grateful. They got us through," Dan recalls.




In 2021 the size of the business doubled. But having become heavily reliant on supermarkets, 2022 proved tricky. In what was a tough board meeting, Dan decided he needed to do three things to protect his health, and the health of the business: take on someone to help run it, spend more time with his family, and move production to an external manufacturer.

Today, five companies produce the key range of snacks, using Made for Drink's own equipment and processes. Rather than spending his time with an accountant, Dan says the decision has brought him back where he wants to be – in product development, and with customers, which has led to some powerful alliances.

Fen Farm Dairy is a prime example. "Their Baron Bigod is the best cheese in the UK in my opinion," says Dan, who contacted farmer Jonny Crickmore with the "ridiculous" idea to produce a cheese and onion crisp in Made for Drink's English Heritage range – but one that would be enticing to the speciality food retail market.

"We've never had so many leads from fine food retailers for samples," Dan beams. "Success is about being adaptable, and focussing on what's selling well. I'm hugely excited to see where we go next."

> "It dawned on me, at the time, there was a movement driven by customers who want a better product"



# ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS

Keeping your shelves and counters looking fresh is key in fine food retail. Especially so in the lead-up to Christmas when consumers are seeking inspiration for the dining table, festive parties and delicious edible gifts. We've rounded up some brilliant additions for your stocklist this autumn and winter – from the traditional, to innovative, exciting new must-haves.



## BOBA BOX

Trailblazing Boba Box introduced the core ingredients of bubble tea to the UK, with its famous popping juice balls, jellies, powders, syrups. The brand is continually innovating, enabling retailers to energise the experience for the end customer. It's perhaps why in 2022 it sold the equivalent of 7,070,634 cups of bubble tea across 28 countries. First to market 13 years ago, Boba Box has a loyal customer base of bubble tea retailers, restaurants, dessert shop chains and franchises, consistently supplying them with the largest range of premium ingredients, machinery and consumables.
To learn how you can elevate your bubble tea business and enjoy a 10% discount on your first-time Boba Box order, call today.
**020 3856 5880 office@bobabox.co.uk**
**bobabox.co.uk**




## FLOWER & WHITE

Prepare to fill your stockings with Flower & White's brand new, exciting Christmas range which boasts innovations such as Mallowettes, Double Dipped Pretzels in two extraordinary flavours (White Chocolate & Raspberry and Salted Caramel), and chocolate-covered Baby Meringue Kisses. The award-winning products are handcrafted by the brand in Shropshire using the best quality, ethical chocolate and all natural ingredients – always vegetarian and always light.
They're perfect for all occasions – sharing at Christmas gatherings, or enjoying as a well-deserved treat whilst present wrapping. Big on indulgence and great tasting, they are sure to add a touch of brightness to everyone's festivities. Flower & White has made gift giving easy – all you need to do is choose your favourite!
**01952 684626 hello@flowerandwhite.co.uk**
**flowerandwhite.co.uk**




## FAIRFIELDS FARM

By popular demand, Fairfields Farm are bringing back their Maple Glazed Ham flavour, available from October. Made with potatoes grown at the independent family farm and cooked on site, the crisps are also gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan – meaning no one misses out on this crunchy treat. Fairfields Farm crisps are thick-cut and skin-on, with the Maple Glazed Ham flavour being tumbled in a sweet and smoky seasoning infused with a subtle hint of clove, transporting the existing range of eight flavours from Fairfields Farm snacks straight to the festive dinner table. Plus, they will stand out in any display, with a premium metallic finish and eye-catching wintry design.
**01206 241613 hello@fairfieldsfarmcrisps.co.uk**
**fairfieldsfarmcrisps.co.uk**




## COCOA CANOPY

Created by expert chocolatiers, these wonky chocolate beads create a creamy, delicious drinking chocolate. There's no one called Willy at Cocoa Canopy, but the beads are proudly crafted in their very own chocolate factory in Essex.
With five unique blends, from Smooth Milk (37% cocoa) to vegan Ecuador Dark (70% cocoa), this mood-boosting drink can be enjoyed whenever, whatever the weather. Upgrade your drinking chocolate for autumn and enjoy over ice while summer lasts.
Melt the beads with a splash of boiling water and stir in cold or hot milk. For baristas: simply steam milk and chocolate beads together to show off those amazing latte-art-skills!
**07476 894260 sales@cocoacanopy.co.uk**
**cocoacanopy.co.uk**



## SUMMERDOWN

Summerdown's collection of award-winning peppermint chocolates and herbal teas are a must-have this Christmas season. Made from signature Black Mitcham peppermint grown on the family farm, the range includes a classic dark chocolate peppermint creams, peppermint thins, crisps and soft-centred dominoes. Summerdown's individually-wrapped Heritage fondants and crisps offer a more grown-up taste, whilst the indulgent truffles and Ultimate Mint Chocolate Collection make perfect presents. Additionally, their restorative herbal teas, made entirely from herbs grown on the farm, are ideal for the end of a meal, and can also aid digestion and sleep.
**01256 780252 sales@summerdownmint.com**
**summerdown.com**




## WALKER'S NONSUCH TOFFEES

Independent family company Walker's Nonsuch has been making quality toffee since 1894. Combining the best ingredients, such as whole milk, with over 100 years of expertise, the taste and chew of every bite is second to none. The range includes toffee bars, bags, slabs, and a number of unique gifts. There are 14 varieties of delightful toffees and chocolate eclairs to enjoy, including favourites such as Liquorice and Salted Caramel. Each one is twist-wrapped in metallised film, so they look as good as they taste. Toffees come in 150g and 2.5kg bags (perfect for sharing) as well as 1.25kg jars. All products are free from artificial colours, preservatives, hydrogenated vegetable oils and gluten.
**01782 321525 sales@walkers-nonsuch.co.uk**
**walkers-nonsuch.co.uk**




## THREE MILLS

From traditional favourites to innovative flavours, Three Mills' award-winning mulled range has something for everyone. The brand's classic Mulled Wine is a guaranteed crowd-pleaser, recently gaining a gold medal at the prestigious IWSC awards. With the growth of no/low showing no sign of abating, ensure your range caters to all tastes with Three Mills' IWSC silver award-winning Mulled Punch 0% – a deliciously warming alternative, it delivers all the festive spirit of Mulled Wine, without the alcohol. With exciting flavours such as Spiced Clementine, Gingerbread and Spiced Apple Mulled Cider to drive incremental sales, the range is a must-stock this winter.
**01603 872474 sales@broadlanddrinks.com**
**broadlanddrinks.com**




## A L'OLIVIER

A l'Olivier (a creator of perfect pairings since 1822) selects, prepares and bottles its extensive aromatic olive oil range at its plant in the Nice countryside, a stone's throw from the olive trees. The team's unique expertise brings together sun-soaked olives harvested from partner farms and delicious aromatic herbs, citrus fruits, vegetables and spices. All these ingredients allow A l'Olivier to create artisanal oils and vinegars, bursting with flavour that will add a new culinary dimension to your dishes.

**07845014242 rhianhooper@daregalgourmet.co.uk**
**oilmerchant.co.uk**




## DRAGON

Dragons' new Dragon Handcrafted Cavern selection has been developed in partnership with Llanfair Slate Caverns near Harlech, adding a real depth of flavour to the brand's premium selection of cheese. Each one is made to a bespoke recipe, and matured underground (in original mining caverns) over a number of months until selected at the perfect point by an expert grader. This off-grid, natural maturation chamber is not only ideal from a technical and environmental perspective, but has a conceptual resonance too, tapping into the deeper mythologies around Wales as an ancient land of folklore and legend. The range has a rich flavour, true provenance, and its story is steeped in Welsh history.

**01766 810251 dragonwales.co.uk**



## 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 accolades.

**01845 587 220 info@shepherdspurse.co.uk**
**shepherdspurse.co.uk**




## TRUEFOODS

It's time to elevate your barbecued meat to a whole new level of deliciousness, with TRUEfoods' richly-flavoured jus, sauces and gravies.

Try brushing your steaks with the brand's robust Red Wine or Veal Jus before cooking, and watch as they sizzle, creating a rich, caramelised crust, sealing in all that flavour and goodness - bringing out the best in your beef. Prefer a good sauce? TRUEfoods' creamy Peppercorn or Steak Diane sauces, or Beef Gravy should hit the spot. Delicious over a steak and a great dip for your triple-cooked chips or fries! Gather your friends and family, fire up the grill and let TRUEfoods products become the crowning glory of all your outdoor feasts.

**01765 640927 info@truefoodsltd.com**
**truefoodsltd.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**




## TIPTREE PATISSERIE

The Cream Tea Box from Tiptree Patisserie has been meticulously created to bring the quintessential British tradition to those who seek convenience without compromising on taste and quality. Perfect for busy individuals, families on the go, or as a thoughtful gift, this elegantly packaged box allows cream tea enthusiasts to savour every bite without the need for lengthy preparation, all you need to decide is it jam or cream first!

**01376 509101 tiptreepatisserie@tiptree.com**
**tiptreecakes.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**




## JAMU WILD WATER

It's time to up your hydration game with this award-winning prebiotic sparkling water, filled with gut-friendly plant fibre, and nourishing British-grown botanicals.

Jamu Wild Water's immune-boosting drinks sparkle with natural fruit flavours and gentle sweetness for the whole family to enjoy – and with no sugar or artificial sweeteners in sight!

Each refreshing drink delivers 100% of your daily prebiotic requirement, and 38% RDA of Vitamin C. Now that's wild. It's all part of the brand's mission to embrace nature-led living that rewilds from the inside-out.

**01392 984311 hello@jamuwildwater.co.uk**
**jamuwildwater.co.uk**




## SAUCE SHOP

Are you stocking Sauce Shop yet? All Sauce Shop sauces are made using nothing artificial and are fast becoming a storecupboard essential for UK households. Their UK-made range has won over 30 Great Taste Awards since it all started in 2014 in James and Pam's home kitchen, with products now stocked by over 500 independent retailers. Check out their collab with 12:51 chef James Cochran – a Scotch Bonnet Jam with full-on flavour. Available to order via Cotswold Fayre or online.

**01159 413 263 sales@sauceshop.co**
**sauceshop.co**




## GOOD & HONEST

Good & Honest is a range of healthy plant-based snacks with a great crunch. The brand's popped crisps come in three families; core, veggie and protein. They're all natural, low in calories, a source of protein, high in fibre, low in fat and gluten free! For those looking to increase their protein intake, Good & Honest offers three flavours containing at least 20g of protein per 100g. Good & Honest never uses anything artificial and its snacks are never fried. Instead, the team uses innovative technology to 'pop' its snacks. The brand was founded with a simple mission in mind: good ingredients, honestly made.

**01932 267470 sales@gftretail.com**
**goodandhonest.co.uk**




## BARON POUGET'S OXFORD SAUCE

Baron Pouget's Oxford Sauce is a spicy table sauce created by Baron Robert Pouget in his Oxford production kitchen to celebrate the millennium. It bears virtually no resemblance to the traditional derivative of Cumberland Sauce, referred to as Oxford Sauce by Escoffier. Its ingredients are a combination of molasses, tamarind, anchovy, dates, garlic and birdseye chillies. The final recipe came more or less by accident when the decimal point on the chilli content was misread at the time of conception. The result is a terrific sauce, appreciated as a cooking ingredient or as an accompaniment to hot and cold dishes.

**07712000406 sales@oxfordfinefood.com**
**oxfordfinefood.com**




## OVER THE MOO

We all know that bite-sized ice cream is all the rage, but what if we started talking about sublime, 'sharing pouches' of guilt-free sweet treats that had more than a passing resemblance to a mini choc ice of yesteryear? Over the Moo's frozen goodies are perfectly proportioned. Each one is coated in dark chocolate, and - coming in at less than 30 calories – ideal for passing around amongst friends, or tucking away in that secret freezer space for a 'me-time' moment. Both of the decadent flavours (vanilla and caramel) come in fully recyclable plastic pouches, and are gluten and artificial colouring-free.

**07876 0231829 simon@overthemoo.co.uk**
**overthemoo.co.uk**




## WELSH LADY PRESERVES

Sôs Coch – Welsh Lady Preserves' version of a much-loved traditional favourite - is an essential ingredient to transform food into a meal to remember. Packed with chopped ripe tomatoes, the ketchup is free from artificial colours and flavours, and as it's crafted with spirit vinegar, it's also sulphite-free. Welsh Lady Sôs Coch is one of many award-winning products, handmade by the Jones family in North Wales since 1966. Each batch is lovingly prepared from the finest ingredients and cooked slowly in open pans, just like you would at home.

**01766 810 496 sales@welshladypreserves.com**
**welshladypreserves.com**




## DIPP'D

The Tikka range from Dipp'd draws upon the rich flavours of one of the world's most beloved dishes, transforming it into four unique sauces made to enliven any culinary creation. Your favourite condiments now come with a quirky twist – think tikka masala in a bottle. The range includes tikka variants on ketchup, mayonnaise, barbecue and hot sauce – truly versatile (after all, there's no meal a good old sauce can't make better). And here's the exciting part – they're all vegan!

**07342287129 contact@dippd.co.uk**
**dippd.co.uk**



## CLEMENCY HALL

Clemency Hall brings quality, value and exclusive cheeses to the independent counter. The range of artisan cheese and fine foods is exclusive to Rowcliffe, and is full of character and made by artisans for the independent retailer. Products have been sourced from local producers in Britain and Europe, and include some award-winners. The collection also boasts a selection of the finest olives and antipasti which have been hand selected from the Mediterranean. For retailers who have little space for stand-over deli counters or store staff, the Clemency Hall range provides the opportunity to still offer speciality and premium cheeses.

**01892 838999**
**rowcliffe.co.uk**




## GOURMADE

Gourmade's founder, Jo, wanted to give her family high quality, delicious home-cooked food, but she also needed more convenience. She began experimenting with batch cooking and freezing her family favourites. When this was a success, and she realised how many other people had the same aspiration, Gourmade came to be. Jo and the team have worked hard to develop their recipes. Each one is made with love and care, using quality ingredients, and frozen from fresh.

**0845 241 1568 julia@gourmade.com**
**gourmade.com**

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# HOW TO: CATER FOR ALL CHEESE BUDGETS

With customers still restricting their shopping lists, we explore how indies can help them access great cheese, without breaking the budget

While supermarkets may have the upper hand with temptingly low prices, independent cheesemongers and retailers have the knowledge, quality and flexibility to offer value to their customer base.

## Why indies are well-placed to support budgets

With agile supply chains, independent cheesemongers and retailers are well-placed to support customers on a budget.

As Jen Grimstone-Jones, co-owner of Cheese Etc. in Pangbourne, explains, "Small, independent shops like ours can react to situations quicker than the larger supermarkets. "We may not be able to match the buying power of larger shops, but we can listen to the needs of our customers and make sure that we're offering high quality products at the best possible prices."

Stephen Flemming, owner of George & Joseph in Leeds, agrees, "As an independent business, we have the flexibility to change and adapt our range quickly. If a particular cheese starts to get too expensive then we can seek out alternative options that are more affordable to our customers.

"We are always on the lookout for special offers from wholesalers. "When there's an oversupply of cheese that needs to find a new home, we can source cheeses at better price points, and then pass on these savings to our customers."

Of course, by nature, cheesemongers are also fountains of knowledge, separating them from multiples. "Our commitment to customer service means that our team of highly trained cheesemongers are well versed in the entire range of cheeses we stock. They are experts in guiding budget-conscious customers towards more cost-effective options and alternatives without compromising on quality or taste," Stephen explains.

## How cheesemongers can help

According to Stephen, cheesemongers' advantage is the ability to cut to order. "Not everyone needs a kilo of cheese, and we can accommodate requests down to as little as 50g (sometimes even a bit less!)," he tells *Speciality Food*.

"While our cost per kilo may be higher compared to the supermarkets, our approach allows customers to buy precisely what they need, resulting in significant savings (and a win for reducing food waste too)."

Jen agrees, "We also encourage our customers to try any cheeses that are new to them before they buy them so that they know they are leaving the shop with something they like.

"If a customer comes in and wants to spend £10 on a mixed cheeseboard, we can always put something together that sticks to the budget. It's all about listening to the customer and curating something that works for their situation," Jen explains.

## The budget benefits of artisan cheese

Artisan cheeses themselves also have a super power– they have more robust and concentrated flavours than the majority of supermarket varieties.

"If you're cooking with cheese, then you need less of an artisan cheese to get the level of flavour needed for the dish you're making.

"Savvy cooks and cheese enthusiasts can stretch the longevity and impact of artisan cheeses, ensuring they go further without compromising on taste," according to Stephen.

Artisan quality also offers the ability to extend the life of your cheese at home.

As Jen tells *Speciality Food*, "We're always getting asked about the best way to store cheese.

"Our advice is to keep cheeses at home in an airtight box in the fridge and keep each piece wrapped in wax paper, beeswax wrap or clingfilm. This will stop the cheese drying out.

"If you do end up with a dry piece of cheese, you can still use it to cook with, so don't throw it away!"

Indeed, as Stephen advises, "I use the rind of cheeses like Parmigiano Reggiano PDO when I'm cooking any stock, bolognese or risotto.

"Just drop the rind into the dish during the last 30 minutes or so to extract the flavour. The longer you steep the rind in the sauce, the more flavour you'll get from it!"

> "We may not be able to match the buying power of larger shops, but we can listen to the needs of our customers and make sure that we're offering high quality products at the best possible prices"

### BUDGET-FRIENDLY TIPS WITH JEN GRIMSTONE-JONES

Bear in mind that younger cheeses are also generally less expensive than more mature ones, and that cows' milk is generally cheaper than goat or sheeps' milk cheese. Moreover, British produced cows' milk hard and blue cheeses have held their prices well over the past 12 months, and territorial styles have held steady price wise.

If you want to put together a cheeseboard on a budget I would suggest some West Country Brie, rather than the traditional French Brie de Meaux, our house Cheddar (Gould's Farmhouse) which has masses of flavour without a big price tag, and some Bleu d'Auvergne PDO from France. You could add in a good smoked cheese such as Dorset Red and a piece of chevré (French goats' cheese). These are all good quality cheeses which will have lovely flavours and they don't cost as much as some other offerings.



# MEET THE CHEESEMAKER

## Experience the delights of the Cheshire Cheese Company. A journey of passion and flavour









Deep in the heart of Cheshire, Simon Spurrell first embarked on a cheese-making adventure over 13 years ago, launching the Cheshire Cheese Company. Simon's unwavering passion has seen his business thrive and captivate cheese enthusiasts nationwide. Being majority acquired in late 2022 by fellow Cheshire-based family cheese maker, Joseph Heler, has further propelled the company to new heights, securing its legacy and dedication to artisanal production in Cheshire's cheese heartland.

Of the recent changes, Simon says, "The Cheshire Cheese Company has undergone a brand refresh, giving the now widely beloved cheese brand a fresh and modern look while staying true to its cheeky Cheshire cat motif and slogan, 'Cheese That Makes You Grin.'" This exciting update coincides with the introduction of three new mouth-watering flavours that promise to ensure the product range maintains its sense of relevance: Masala - Red Leicester blended with spicy mango chutney and nigella seeds, Smokewood - a smoked and aged Red Leicester, and Hunter - Cheddar exuberantly mixed with truffle and cracked black pepper. These innovative creations are testament to Simon's creativity and commitment to pushing the boundaries of quality cheese-making.

Alongside the brand refresh, the Cheshire Cheese Company's website and social media presence has also been revamped. Simon, who's always maintained that customer experience is paramount, says, "Visitors receive a delightful online experience which builds rapport with consumer customers who recognise the brightly coloured wax truckles when they see them in store. Rich with engaging content, the website now features an array of tasty recipes and serving suggestions, ensuring customers can make the most of their cheese. Whether it's an indulgent cheeseboard, a delightful sandwich, or a decadent pasta dish, the Cheshire Cheese Company provides the inspiration needed to elevate any culinary creation."

With a background in graphic design and marketing, having started his career with an IT business, Simon knows a thing or two about building an appealing brand. "As we gather pace in this digital age, online presence is increasingly important to us, which is why we connect and engage with our trade and consumer customers through numerous online touch points," he says.

"We're very active on social media and have amassed almost 10,000 followers on Instagram, 30,000 Facebook, and 22,000 Twitter followers. This supports our retail customers, so when people visit stockists, they instantly recognise the products. We've built the Cheshire Cheese Club, which now has a membership of over 70,000 people. They enjoy exclusive discounts as well as birthday treats, so it's helped solidify our loyal CCC community."

The journey has been one of dedication, craftsmanship and a deep love for quality cheese. Simon's tireless pursuit of excellence has led to the creation of an extraordinary range, each product handcrafted with care and precision - from the signature Black Bob mature Cheddar, to the bold and spicy El Gringo.




Last year the business debuted its own line of complimentary chutneys and cheese biscuits. Simon says, "The feedback so far has been excellent, and the sales volumes speak for themselves. Sitting down to enjoy cheese, biscuits and chutney is one of life's simplest yet purest pleasures and we wanted to play a bigger part in that. We're always experimenting with new cheese flavours, so this was a natural next step."

For retailers seeking to elevate their offerings and entice customers with unique and irresistible cheese, the Cheshire Cheese Company was created to be the perfect addition to their shelves. "But don't just take my word for it." adds Simon. "We're proud to be a multi award-winning premium cheese producer and have collected many accolades over the last 13 years, most recently claiming three Gold awards at the International Cheese & Dairy Awards this July."

As an avid cheese connoisseur, Simon shares his favourite way of savouring his delectable creations. "Take a good slice of the Cheshire Cheese Company's finest Vintage Mature Cheddar and enjoy it alongside slices of crisp, juicy, local apple. The combination of the creamy, tangy cheese with the refreshing sweetness of the apple creates a harmonious flavour symphony that's sure to please even the most discerning palates."

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# Great British Cheddar Challenge launches in September

**The first edition of the Great British Cheddar Challenge will take place on Saturday 16th September.**

Founded by James Grant of No2 Pound Street in Aylesbury, its aim is to fly the flag for artisan Cheddar and celebrate the nuanced and layered flavour profiles being created by cheesemakers across Britain.

Participating retailers will sell tasting boxes of six unlabelled artisan Cheddars. These will then be discussed during an online blind tasting event on 16th September, presented by comedian and cheese judge, Marcus Brigstocke, alongside industry experts.

The event invites cheese lovers to challenge their perceptions of Cheddar – after all artisan Cheddar accounts for just 3% of the cheese's sales in the UK. Marcus and co will guide viewers through some of the finest examples of artisan Cheddar ever made – exploring how the seasons, the grass, the cows, the makers, and the unique microflora in maturing rooms have influenced each truckle – before a People's Choice Award vote takes place to find the nation's favourite Cheddar.

Founder James Grant commented, "Cheddar is the nation's undisputed big cheese, but we want to challenge people's palates and perceptions to safeguard the future of those making it according to time-honoured principles. While supermarket Cheddars seek to satisfy the masses with a generic flavour profile, our artisan cheesemakers are producing incredible and varied wedges using recipes, techniques and cultures going back decades and even centuries."

# BRITISH DOUBLE GLOUCESTER TAKES THE CROWN AT ICDAS 2023

After an intense day of tastings by a pool of cheese experts and enthusiasts, including *Speciality Food's* Charlotte Smith-Jarvis, the International Cheese and Dairy Awards (ICDA) announced its winners.

Taking the crown as Supreme Champion Cheese was First Milk UK's Haverfordwest Mature Double Gloucester – a proudly British cheese. The winners from other major categories were as follows:

**SUPREME CHAMPION CHEESE**
Sponsored by Chr Hanson

**Winner**
FIRST MILK UK | Haverfordwest Mature Double Gloucester

**Reserve**
FBNZ New Zealand | Kikorangi Triple Cream Blue

**CHAMPIONSHIP**
**The Champion**
UK FIRST MILK UK | Haverfordwest Mature Double Gloucester

**The Reserve Champion UK**
CROPWELL BISHOP | Stilton

**The Champion Overseas**
FBNZ New Zealand Kikorangi Triple Cream Blue

**The Reserve Champion Overseas**
De GRAAFSTROOM Mature Gouda

**Supreme Champion Continental Cheese**
Treur Kaas

**SUPREME SPECIALIST/ ARTISAN CHEESEMAKER**
**Champion Winner**
BERRYS| Greek Gourmet Cheese – Australia

**CHEESE BOARD AWARDS**
**Champion Winner**
FRIARS FARM - Lemon Curd

# DalterFood Group introduces 'Spinoro', a 100% Italian, high-quality aged cheese




**Made in Italy according to a traditional method using 100% Italian cow's milk from farms in the Po Valley, DalterFood Group's new Spinoro is an aged hard cheese with a fine grainy texture.** It has a fragrant, delicate flavour, making it perfect for both cooked and raw dishes.

As one of the big players in the national and international dairy sector, DalterFood Group offers this cheese in various cuts and packs, so every customer can find the right product to enhance the flavour of any dish. It is also made with microbial rennet, making it suitable for vegetarians – a constantly growing food trend among consumers who prefer to give up animal protein partly or completely.

The single-serving sachets, made with 100% recyclable material, containing Spinoro in flakes, ribbons or shavings, are perfect for putting in packs of ready meals, fresh pre-prepared salads, or meal kits. Cubes are also available on request.




# Cornish Cheese Co adds new British Camembert to range

**Cornish Camembert is the newest addition to the Cornish Cheese Co's exciting range of handmade farmhouse cheeses**. After the success of their versions of Brie and Gouda, the brand decided to put its own spin on another continental classic with a Cornish farmhouse difference. Made with pasteurised cows' milk and vegetarian rennet, this is a truly unique British Camembert which develops grassy notes and rich buttery flavours. This cheese rounds off the Cornish septet of Brie, Cheddar, Yarg, Nanny, Blue and Gouda, and caters to increased consumer interest in local produce. Cornish Cheese Co also fits the sustainability brief, as the team use solar panel energy to help power the electric for the dairy and farm buildings to reduce consumption from the national grid and make the most of the lovely Cornish sun.



# Snowdonia Cheese Company launches 'Make it Exceptional' summer campaign

**Multi-award-winning cheese producer Snowdonia Cheese Company has just announced Make it Exceptional, a point-of-sale summer recipe campaign for Snowdonia stockists**. The team behind the iconic Black Bomber and more recent additions Truffle Trove and Rock Star developed the campaign as part of their ongoing support to stockists of Snowdonia products.

The campaign toolkit includes a leaflet dispenser, and leaflets featuring recipes, created with Snowdonia's Cheddars and Red Leicesters that elevate everyday summer dishes. Snowdonia has also produced a limited number of cheese sampling kits, containing 1kg of diced Black Bomber extra mature Cheddar; 50 summer recipe leaflets with a display dispenser; cocktail sticks; and Snowdonia branded greaseproof paper.




In addition to the campaign, Snowdonia will be running a display photo competition, encouraging creativity at the counter. For more information about the competition, or to request a campaign or sampling kit, contact sales@snowdonia-cheese.co.uk or call 01745 360 246.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### GEORGE MEWES LISTS BOTH SCOTTISH LOCATIONS ON THE MARKET

Award-winning artisan cheese retail business George Mewes has listed its Edinburgh and Glasgow premises on the property market – looking for a new owner to take over the business. Having successfully navigated the Covid pandemic, and now generating consistently high sales in-store and online, former chef and owner George believes the time is right to pass over the reins to someone new who can build on the current success.

### AUSTRALIAN PRODUCERS AT RISK OF LOSING CHEESE NAMING RIGHTS IN EU DEAL

Australia is being forced to give up naming rights to hundreds of products — including Parmesan, Mozzarella, and Feta — as part of a lucrative trade deal with the European Union, one of the world's biggest markets. The country has been negotiating a deal since 2019, and Australian dairy farmers have urged the government not to make them a 'scapegoat' in the final stages of trade negotiations with the European Union.




## *'Time to appreciate our artisans'*



**JAMES GRANT**
NO2 POUND STREET

So here I am on the red eye to JFK for the love of cheese.

I've been wanting to visit the USA to explore their cheeses ever since meeting David Gremmels from Rogue Creamery in Bergamo at the World Cheese Awards. His cheese, Rogue River Blue, won Best Cheese in The World. This blue cheese from Oregon is totally awesome. The organic outer rind is wrapped with pear brandy-soaked vine leaves. This perfectly leads your palate to a luscious and creamy blue cheese heart, with crunchy tyrosine crystals. What a tasting trip my taste buds went on. Truly magical. If you have not tried it yet please do, at least put it on your bucket list of cheeses to taste. It's available from Neal's Yard Dairy.

The last time I was in New York was 2012. I had the most brilliant time at the famous Carlyle Hotel in Manhattan. I was there to do a restaurant takeover, and had an absolute blast with my chefs. Though I found it strange I could not find any cheese of note at the hotel or the delis. There was definitely an artisan cheese scene in NY, led by people like Adam Moskowitz and Murray's Cheese, both importers and exporters.

So why don't we know about American cheese in the UK? America actually has a thriving artisan movement. Like the UK, the percentage of artisan made over industrial is circa 3%. In Britain we do not get to see many of these beautiful cheeses due to import cost and time spent in transit.

Most of the UK believes American cheese is mass-produced. In fact, the first factory-made cheese was crafted in America. This, I am sure, was full of the best intentions, such as feeding the growing population, and helping Americans strive forward whilst building the new frontier. As with industrial British cheese there are some American factories making processed cheese with only huge profit margins in mind. The cheese is then not about quality, sustainability and ethics. It is palatable, and looks good in packaging, which tempts the consumer in. Marketing of such products is often misleading, with slogans such as The Nation's Favourite Cheddar.

So, we really do have a big job to help make artisan more appreciated. Industrialists have big budgets and investors propping them up. They have the highest tech machinery that helps to produce cheese in no time at all. They will have huge budgets for marketing and compliance, including grads paid highly in research and development to help look at ways to increase their overall productivity.

As an artisan cheese specialist I know how hard it is for these amazing artisan producers to keep their business thriving. Challenges in 2023 for both the UK and American artisan cheese markets include high interest rates, power price hikes, spiralling travel costs, and animal feed prices. The cost of living really has become exponentially challenging.

My visit to New York was to attend the Cheese Mongers Invitational, founded by Adam Moskowitz. This is a platform where the best cheesemongers of the USA compete for a massive prize worth thousands of dollars, plus a trip to Europe to visit a cheesemaker. It is held in a giant music venue with cheesemakers offering tasters, and filled with loads of paying guests that are total cheese nerds.

Importantly, the CMI showcases American cheese and shouts out artisan as loudly as possible. The event has media coverage from the New York Times, Vogue, GQ and more. We need events like this in the UK to help the pendulum swing in favour of artisan. Watch this space with more happening soon. The Great British Cheddar Challenge is being held online on the 16th of September at 7pm, hosted by Marcus Brigstocke. Check out your local cheesemongers to find out more information.

> "American cheese has a thriving artisan movement. Like the UK, the percentage of artisan made over industrial is circa 3%. In Britain we do not get to see many of these beautiful cheeses due to import cost and time spent in transit"




## Discover your perfect pairings with these premium cheeseboard picks




**1 BELTON FARM**
**RED FOX**

This handcrafted 16-month matured Red Leicester is skillfully created by the team to be a complex blend of sweet and savoury flavours. There's also an unexpected but delightful crunch, which comes from the naturally-occurring calcium lactate crystals which form as the cheese matures.
**beltonfarm.co.uk**



**2 LONG CLAWSON DAIRY**
**SHROPSHIRE BLUE**

Awarded Supreme Champion and World's Best Cheese in 2022, Shropshire Blue has a deliciously creamy texture with mellow but tangy undertones, made by the master cheesemakers of Long Clawson Dairy. This is the perfect introduction to a blue cheese.
**clawson.co.uk**



**3 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. It is 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**




**4 TREUR KAAS**
**HAPPY MRS. JERSEY OLD WISDOM**



Happy Mrs. Jersey Old Wisdom is a delicious cheese made from organic Jersey milk and matured for at least 12 months on wooden shelves. This cheese is still very creamy and has a rich taste, pairing very well with Port. At the ICDAs 2023 it won a gold award. Order with Fine Cheeses Ltd. and Hamish Johnston.
**treurkaas.nl/en**

**5 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 an irresistibly creamy Cheddar with a distinctively rich and complex flavour.
**snowdoniacheese.co.uk**

**6 CORNISH CHEESE CO**
**CORNISH CAMEMBERT**



Cornish Camembert is the newest addition to the Cornish Cheese Co's exciting range of handmade farmhouse cheeses, following on from the success of the brand's Cornish Brie. A truly unique British Camembert which develops grassy notes and rich buttery flavours.
**cornishcheese.co.uk**

**7 SHEPHERDS PURSE**
**MRS BELL'S BLUE**



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. Meadowy sweetness from sheeps' milk is paired with umami notes of salty blue to deliver a rich, complex flavour that your customers will love.
**shepherdspurse.co.uk**

# ARTISAN CHEESE IN 2023

*Speciality Food* prides itself on 'taking the pulse' of the fine food and drink industry. In this report, we deep dive into the issues and stories being discussed by the nation's cheesemakers and on retail's cheese counters

## REGENERATIVE FARMING NEEDS TO BE DEFINED AND REGULATED



**Is the organic story being lost in the fray as discussions shift to regeneration?**

Organic producers need to "shout more" about their work and the importance of chemical-free farming in the face of rising talk around regeneration in agriculture, says Jessica Kimber Holloway, commercial and operations director at Godminster.

"There are two topics I think worth talking about currently," she adds. "They are pricing, and the difference between conventional farming and regenerative and organic farming. That's a discussion which is becoming more and more confused."

Jessica believes consumers are getting caught up in a jumble of jargon between the terms, and that laypeople won't know the difference between them. "Regenerative. What does it mean? What is it? Where's the legislation to say you can actually call yourself regenerative? There's a lack of clarity around regenerative farming, which is getting a lot of press. But really anyone can call themselves a regenerative farmer. What are they relating to?"

It's these details, says Jessica, that need ironing out, with a clearly defined benchmark put in place.

And, "Organic should be having a bigger, not a lesser, voice at the moment. Those in organic farming need to work harder to shout about why it's important."

Jessica is concerned about A grade land being bought up, and turned over to rewilding as a kind of 'virtue signalling', but believes all efforts (including regenerative) should have a focus on "feeding the nation".

"On the back of Covid, and having experienced food shortages, we need to be careful. Getting back to nature is a good thing, but it needs to be in balance. And it needs management and maintenance, looking at the overall picture. You can't just take 300 to 400 acres and do what you want with it. It's got to be for the whole community, and with the intention of feeding people."

On the topic of milk, Jessica is also worried, particularly about the shortening gap between organic and conventional milk pricing, which has seen some farmers decertifying and moving away from organic to make more money, which she calls a "really sad state of affairs".

She is concerned about the impact this will have not just on organic food production, but the future of dairy farming as a whole, with fewer and fewer young farmers staying within their family business.

"You've got to make a living, and there just isn't the money in dairy to invest in the future," Jessica says. "Last year milk prices skyrocketed, which was really great. But since then we've lost the Milk Marketing Board. All the dairies have been negotiating with farmers, which is fine, but we need to have some consistency.

"This yoyo effect around the milk price is disruptive. We just need stability so everybody can plan – from the farmer, through to retail."

**HENRY DIMBLEBY'S NATIONAL FOOD STRATEGY HAS NOW RECOMMENDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT PUT ASIDE UP TO £700M TO PAY FARMERS TO CREATE NATURE-RICH, CARBON SEQUESTERING LANDSCAPES**

> "This yoyo effect around the milk price is disruptive. We just need stability so everybody can plan– from the farmer through to retail"
>
> JESSICA KIMBER HOLLOWAY



## IT PAYS TO THINK DIFFERENT IN DAIRY



**Standing out from the crowd is the key to success, says industry insider**

According to cheesemaker and chair of the Specialist Cheesemakers Association, Catherine Mead OBE, the past three years have been a time of "extraordinary change and volatility".

Most producers, she says, have had to make fundamental changes to their business models, including switching to online and direct sales which, in many cases, brought makers closer to customers.

They were able to, "Reinforce messages of short supply chains, provenance, integrity of raw ingredients, and to develop customer interest and loyalty to local food."

At a time when costs are rising in food, she adds it's increasingly difficult not to put up the price of cheese, so building brand loyalty, being "exceptional" and "clearly differentiating" products has never been more important.

"Driving unnecessary cost out of the business and focussing on our environmental commitments are also key. As smaller businesses we are more agile and perhaps, budgets permitting, better able to make quick and positive changes - an important element of financial sustainability and achieving customer relevance.

"Organisations such as the Specialist Cheese Makers Association who support on matters technical and quality, are vital in ensuring cheese makers can maximise the opportunities and meet customer expectations.



# SCOTTISH CHEESE SHOULDN'T BE SEEN AS A GIMMICK

**Highland fare isn't just for Burns Night, with online searches high for a traditional Scottish cheese**

When *Speciality Food* tells Rory Stone, of Highland Fine Cheeses, that Scottish Crowdie (a creamy, fresh cheese) has been trending online, he's flummoxed.

It's just the kind of news the cheese industry needs 'over the border'. However, as he explains, getting Scottish cheese out to consumers is a battle.

"One of the things that's really dominant today, understandably, is the circular economy. Multiples like this sort of thing.

"They want to be strong whichever location they're based in, and will try to source local products."

Although supporting local is commendable, and important, Rory says it makes it harder for 'outsiders' to break the mould, unless there's a thematic opportunity. "If anything," Rory explains, "Scottish cheesemakers spend so much time immersed in tartan, ginger wigs and thistles, that we've almost done ourselves out. We've over-gimmicked our products."

But, he quickly adds, Scottish cheese is something that should be heralded, at any time of the year – not just when occasions arise. The country's lush pastures and wetter climate are ideal for producing high quality dairy. "The great thing about Scotland is our rainfall. It's not something most celebrate, but it means we can grow a lot of grass. The west of Scotland is natural dairy country, and Ayrshire is fantastic for sileage. We should be good at making cheese!"

Rory looks to the Irish model of cheesemaking, and selling into wholesale as something Scotland should replicate. "They've done incredibly well in promoting their products. We should be able to do that here."

Scotland is, Rory adds, "Terribly keen to promote its dairy. We want to take part in the whole UK economy. No doubt, I'd say that's true of all cheesemakers in the north. It's about learning how to work better south of Hadrian's Wall."

Retailers unfamiliar with trending Crowdie (made and sold by HFC and a select few other Scottish producers) might be interested in trying it out on the counter.

Steeped in legend, it is, reveals Rory, a simple curd cheese, taught to Scots by the Vikings. "Previous to the Highland Clearances, this was all cattle country. In the north you had tiny farms where they reared cattle. Every little house or croft had a cow.

"When there was spare milk it would be preserved to make cheese. The top was creamed off for butter, then the partially skimmed milk would warm by the range. The naturally occurring culture from the udders of the cow would gobble up the lactose, and eventually it would set like yoghurt. Then it would be put onto direct heat, to scramble like eggs, and hung in muslin to drain off the whey, with salt added. It was eaten fresh, and would keep for a couple of days."



Rory, maker of the likes of Minger and Fat Cow, in addition to Crowdie, says it's a good alternative to cream, smeared over a scone with jam, or used to make a mackerel pate...even ice cream. "It's quite moreish when you start nibbling away."




# VEGAN CHEESE TAKES A LEAP FORWARD



**The dairy-free market is growing, and getting better as it matures**

Plant-based artisanal cheeses are on the rise, says Ellie Brown, founder of The Kinda Co in Somerset. This is largely driven, she believes, by customers demanding more variety, and quality that can match traditional dairy.

"I've seen an emergence of a lot of other brands developing vegan cheese lines," Ellie explains. "And I think in 10 years' time the plant-based cheese market will look a lot like the alternative proteins market now. A decade ago we didn't have many vegan options for things like burgers or sausages, then along came brands like Beyond Meat, and now they are all over the supermarket and restaurants. Vegan cheese isn't quite there yet, but I think it will happen."

A self-professed 'cheese snob', Ellie says the key to getting vegan cheese right is understanding that, "You won't win anyone over if it [your product] doesn't stand on its own two feet next to dairy."

She continues, "I think those brands who first started making vegan cheese are realising their customers are becoming more discerning with what they want. "More and more people are looking for alternatives, and customers are definitely being more demanding. "It's interesting to see big cheese companies responding. So, Cathedral City and Applewood bringing out vegan cheeses that are now cited as favourites in supermarkets."

Amongst her peers, Ellie says she's seeing more and more artisanal techniques being employed. "Like us, more people are using cultures and creating bloomy rinds for camembert-style cheeses. There are experimental cheeses being made using seeds and pulses, like beans, with varying degrees of success. It's an exciting time."

Ellie started making her own vegan cheese, having been turned off by what was available to her when she gave up dairy. The Kinda Co's top seller is its Farmhouse cheese, made with a combination of old and new methods. "We use a traditional culture, and fermentation to echo that sharp, tangy, lovely flavour. And we bring extra umami with things like miso and nutritional yeast for that depth and rounded taste.

"Lots of our customers aren't vegan. I think it's a true testament to any free-from product. That someone would choose to eat it just because they enjoy it."

She's also seeing sales rocketing for the business's take on feta.

"It's a great all-rounder. As soon as we start making it, our supply is being stripped out!"



# THE WORLD IS LOOKING TO BRITAIN FOR CHEESE INNOVATION AND IDEAS



**The UK's 'cheese renaissance' has caused a stir across the globe, with all eyes on us for 'the next big thing' says cheesemaker**

Jonny Crickmore, founder of Fen Farm Dairy, says he's noticing more 'new wave' cheeses coming through globally – many of them taking inspiration from UK makers and artisans.

"We're definitely leading the way," Jonny says. "The British cheese industry, over the years, has grown to the point where it's become more of a serious outfit. The quality of what we're making here is undeniable.

"There are two types of cheese being made in the UK. You've got commodity block cheese (the big industry stuff that's everywhere) and then the speciality cheese scene in which you've got some real old school traditional territorials that have been around forever and stuck through the tough times when the cheese scene died completely.

"Over the past 20 to 25 years a new wave of cheesemakers have come through that are completely different. There hasn't been this kind of movement before, and it's catching on with other makers overseas."



Jonny points out the rise in artisan makers, working on a smaller scale, creating what he says is a much more diverse array of cheeses.

"People always talk about France as a 'benchmark', but while France has a got a lot of cheeses, they are all quite big and old businesses, whereas we have this new, vibrant scene that's having a knock-on effect in other places like the USA and Australia. "The attention British cheese is getting is brilliant, and it's meaning more and more exciting, interesting things are happening around the world. That's something I think we should be proud of."

Jonny, who's currently working on a top-secret new product, says diversity and consistency have been key to Fen Farm's success. This year the business opened its second staff-free farm shop, having launched Britain's first vending machine farm shop model. Additionally, the farm has just partnered with Made for Drink, which is making Baron Bigod Cheese & Onion flavour crisps as part of its English Heritage range.

Being cautious and staying true to your brand are important for any cheesemaker looking to expand their horizons, Jonny warns. "Often diversifying can stop you focussing on the things you do so well. I would say to other makers, you've got to be careful not to do too many things. "Every business is different but if the core of your business is farming, which for a lot of cheesemakers it will be, think about doing things that relate to what you're good at."

# IT'S ESSENTIAL TO REACT TO EMERGING CONSUMER TRENDS



**Staying on-topic, and taking regular stock of what customers are looking for is key to survival in the cheesemaking industry**

The cheese market is being impacted by a shift in consumer preferences says Nick Beadman, head of commercial at Welsh dairy cooperative, South Caernarfon Creameries (SCC). He is seeing a peaked interest in consumers seeking high quality, artisanal cheeses offering unique flavours, with sustainability and ethical sourcing ranking as key purchasing factors. This poses challenges for British cheese makers, he adds, but can also open new doors.

"On one hand," says Nick, "they have an opportunity to expand their product range and cater to the discerning palates of consumers. On the other hand, meeting these new demands requires investment in research and development, sourcing ingredients, and adapting your production processes."

Nick says health-conscious consumers are influencing the market, with a growing emphasis on wellness in the demand for healthier cheese alternatives. And SCC is responding. "We produce a range of reduced-fat products, some of which have recently achieved Gold at the International Cheese and Dairy Awards. In addition, we are trialling lower salt/no salt cheese alternatives without compromising on quality." Forward thinking allows the brand to stay ahead of the curve, as does responding to the growing demand for more sustainable, minimal impact productss regularly.

The dairy works closely with its farmer members to pull focus on sustainability in areas including responsible land management, energy efficiency, and the reduction of waste.



# GREAT STILTON DOESN'T END WITH THE CHEESEMAKER



**It is one of the kings of the festive cheeseboard. As we edge into Christmas buying season, one expert says now's the time to brush up on your blue cheese affinage**

With nearly 50 years in the industry, Kim Kettle, farm liaison director at Long Clawson Dairy, knows his Stilton. And as we broach the subject of Christmas, he says the importance of affinage and making sure staff at retail are skilled in caring for the business's blue cheeses, should not be underestimated.

A great Stilton starts in the factory, where Kim says the making process is a combination of every little element being done properly. "Every single thing you do, every time you touch a cheese, it must be done consistently and correctly. You can't just pick one person and say 'make the cheese'."

The first 24 hours of making Stilton, converting the milk into cheese curds, is the most crucial, with Kim adding, "If you don't get that right, you'll have an inferior cheese, no matter how good you are at affinage. And you can never lose sight of that."

After five days, Stilton is what Kim calls 'a blank canvas'. Then it's up to Long Clawson's team to nurture each cheese accordingly, on the understanding that a batch made today might be ready two weeks ahead of a batch produced tomorrow. "If you didn't have an affineur," he says, "and did the same thing every day, your cheese would be very inconsistent. People need to understand it's a living, breathing entity."

In the hands of an inexperienced monger or retailer, Stilton can be ruined, so it's important, says Kim, to speak to makers, and absorb their advice and knowledge to ensure a great result on the counter. "A good cheesemonger will understand each individual cheese and how it continues to mature, but, also importantly, how their customers will enjoy it.

"Some will come in after a young blue that tastes milky. I would not say that's the perfect Stilton, but some will enjoy that piece of cheese. Know what customers are looking for – a younger Stilton, or something more mature with a creamy centre."

The biggest evil in Stilton selling is letting the cheese dry out and crack through incorrect storage. "You need to keep it in an environment that controls moisture," advises Kim. "Neal's Yard is a good example of somewhere that's got the facilities to store the cheese, because they can control their storage environment.

"Most Stiltons need some form of packing. Good parchment or wax papers that let the cheese breathe are best. Don't vacuum pack. It starves the cheese of oxygen, and its ability to properly mature."

Finally, how does the Stilton pro eat his?

"I love it with a baked potato. A proper baked potato, done in the oven for a couple of hours with a nice crispy skin. Really soft inside. Fork in plenty of butter, add a bit of Stilton. That's to die for.

"Stilton isn't just for cheeseboards. It's extremely versatile to cook with because of its salty, umami profile. "You can use a little in stews or sauces for a background note, without anyone actually knowing you've added blue cheese. A little goes a long way. There's a lot you can do with 150g."



# CHEESEMAKERS NEED TO SUPPORT RETAILERS AT THE COUNTER

## Sampling packs and point-of-sale materials can make a real difference to bottom lines

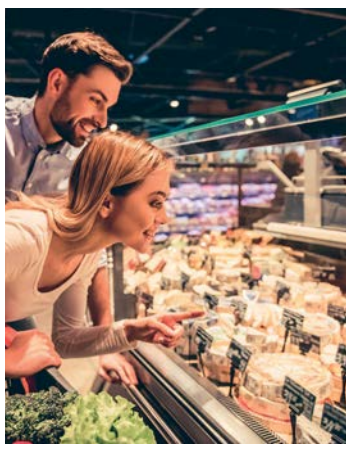
Retailers have a vital part to play in helping cheese businesses flourish and need to be given the right tools to make an impact, says Richard Newton-Jones, commercial director at Snowdonia Cheese Company. It is essential, he adds, that retail staff are armed with the knowledge about what makes every single cheese special in its own right.

The brand has invested heavily in innovation when it comes to retailers, including producing description cards for each of its cheeses. "Displayed on the counter, the side facing the retailer outlines the key details, including flavour profiles and regions, milk type, and information about whether the cheeses are vegetarian-friendly," says Richard. "The side facing the customer shows the brand name of each cheese."

Presentation is crucial, with Snowdonia Cheese Company priding itself on offering training to counter staff, giving advice on the best way to display its cheeses to attract customers, and maximise sales.

"As cheese makers we also recognise the value of offering tasting stock to retailers so shoppers can sample our cheeses in store. "Customers always love to try before they buy and are often drawn to counters with cubes of cheese available to graze on as they make their selections."

The company provides eye-catching, branded point-of-sale displays, including recipe cards to "spark the imagination" and encourage food lovers to cook with its range of cheeses.



# CUSTOMERS ARE SPENDING MORE AND LOOKING FOR LOCAL ALTERNATIVES IN STORE



## It pays to know your stock inside out so you can offer true expertise

Ross Parrock, co-owner of Mill Street Store & Deli in Nayland says, as a new retailer, he's been shocked at the strength of business recently. Footfall at the village deli and café is on the up weekly, with the businessman putting it down to the rising costs of supermarket shopping.

"We're finding people are coming to us from miles away," Ross explains. "It's been very surprising. But I think the reason more delis are opening, and being successful, is that the gap between prices at small independents and larger supermarkets is shrinking. While supermarket costs have shot up in recent months, independents have not quite seen this impact as we tend to buy premium goods at a higher price anyway. We've always paid a fair price and got a good product."

Ross says the interest in locally produced cheeses has been very noticeable. His range of regional cheeses have proved bestsellers, with consistent interest in provenance, traceability and animal welfare.

"Our customers are interested in quality and in English produce – particularly when it comes to cheese. "If you look back 20 years or more, there wasn't a great deal out there in the English cheese market. Now it's exploded and there are constantly new amazing varieties coming on."

When Mill Street Store & Deli first opened Ross noticed a leaning from customers towards flavoured cheeses they hadn't seen in the area before. Truffle goudas, cumin goudas and wild garlic Yarg. "But after they'd tried those, customers started coming back in, wanting something more classic, like Morbier, Reblochon or a traditional Brie de Meaux.

"While they're shopping for those, they're becoming more engaged with less known similar cheeses from the UK and they don't even want to try them. As soon as they know a cheese is British, they just want a piece."

Ross says delis and cheesemongers are in a unique position to educate the public about British-made cheeses, and that his own customers love learning about UK alternatives to big name continental varieties. He takes



Morbier as an example, saying, "Ashcombe is the natural British alternative to a Morbier. Interestingly I'm finding people prefer Ashcombe, but having Morbier in stock, and being able to show customers the cheeses side by side is a really good way of introducing them to fantastic British alternatives.

"People are enjoying the quality, and are happy to pay extra for it."

With a fully-stocked, boundless counter of cheeses from across Europe, Ross is pleased with the variety he's able to sell, but dreams of more mozzarella or burrata-type cheeses made on home turf.

"I really want to see some more locally made ones. There are a few good ones already but it's a big gap in the market, I think. In America a lot of delis make it in-house. Obviously it is a skill, as anything is, but certainly it's achievable over here."



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# ENGLISH SPARKLING WINES

## Home-produced bubbles are popping our corks says Sally-Jayne Wright

When Wine Garden of England, a network of eight producers, held a paid-for tasting in June, organisers were astonished at the turn-out. Some 1,300 enthusiasts made their way to the Balfour winery deep in the Kentish countryside, and masterclasses were reportedly 'packed to the rafters'.

Perhaps these fans had read wine critic Susy Atkins' comment in Decanter: "A tasting of fine English fizz in 2022 reveals complexity, balance and finesse to rival sparklers from any other corner of the globe.'"

### BY 'FINE ENGLISH FIZZ' DO YOU MEAN ENGLISH BUBBLY PRODUCED IN THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OR THE PROSECCO-STYLE WINE KNOWN AS CHARMAT?

Well done for knowing the difference. Charmat is a prosecco-style wine where the bubbles are created in a tank. It is not the same as premium, Traditional Method, bottle fermented and aged sparkling wine, made with French grapes like Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meurnier. Only a tiny handful of the hundreds of British vineyards – shown on a map at winecellardoor.co.uk – produce wine for Charmats.

### SO PREMIUM BRITISH FIZZ THEN. WHAT'S BEHIND THE TREND?

- Quality has soared in the last 20 years
- Amid the cost-of-living crisis, we are treating ourselves to luxuries
- The Coronation boosted awareness as Highgrove, Fortnum & Mason and established producers like Nyetimber and Gusbourne launched celebratory bottles
- Global warming

### DID YOU SAY GLOBAL WARMING CONTRIBUTED TO THE TREND?

Yes. The South East has the climate Champagne had 10-20 years ago.

### IS THAT WHY FRENCH CHAMPAGNE HOUSES BOUGHT UP UK LAND FOR VINES?

You've got it. The chalky Kimmeridgian soil of several Southeastern counties is almost identical to the terroir of Champagne. By 2017, Taittinger and Louis Pommery had planted vines here. Pommery was the first Champagne house to release an English fizz; Taittinger's is due in September 2024.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT TO PAY FOR A BOTTLE OF VINTAGE ENGLISH FIZZ?

English wine marketing expert Fran Bridgewater says £30-£35 will get you a good bottle, £45 an exceptional one.

### WHAT'S THE GREATEST BARRIER TO SALES?

"Price point," says wine trends expert, Katherine Purse. "Those unfamiliar with English fizz, looking for a celebratory fizz, often select a well-known Champagne (such as Veuve Clicquot). Others opt for a more pocket-friendly prosecco." It is for these shoppers that fresh, fruity and aromatic English Charmats such as Silver Reign and Fitz were created. They are about £10 a bottle cheaper than Traditional Method wines.

### WHY IS TRADITIONAL METHOD ENGLISH FIZZ SO PRICEY?

Economies of scale. British estates have tiny yields compared with their Continental counterparts. Compare Nyetimber's one million bottles in 2022 with Moet's yearly output of 28m (Jane MacQuitty).

### WHOSE PREMIUM WINES DO YOU RECOMMEND?

While a wine like Chapel Down Brut NV is a safe option, adventurous connoisseurs will appreciate the first sparkler produced by the Langham Wine Estate in Dorset from 100% Pinot Meunier, or the UK's only Crémant from Bride Valley.

### ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-DRINKING CUSTOMERS?

The co-founder of Cornish Sea Salt, Ellie Bradshaw, has been busy and we were excited to discover her Wild Life Botanicals ultra-low alcohol sparkling wine as sold at Harvey Nichols, and also Trevaskis Farm Shop, Hayle. This clever functional product has the nose, taste and appearance of white or rosé bubbles but 60% fewer calories than Champagne. Containing vitamins and minerals, it is a beautifully-packaged gift for mums-to-be and wellness fans.

### WHAT FOOD GOES WITH ENGLISH FIZZ?

Oysters, smoked mackerel and lobster were on the menu when Rathfinny, Britain's southernmost estate, showcased their wines at the Mandarin Oriental, Hyde Park this year.

### HOW DO WE MAKE THE MOST OF THE TREND?

- Educate staff about the different styles. Younger customers may prefer fruity Charmats to Traditional Method
- Make friends with your local vineyard, whether it's White Castle in Monmouthshire or Busi-Jacobsohn in East Sussex, and host paid-for wine-and-food pairing events
- Stock souvenirs for staycationers. Lobbs Farm Shop in Heligan, Cornwall offers fizz by Trevibban Mill, Bosue, Knightor, Looe Valley and Polgoon, as well as the better-known Camel Valley
- Invest in wine preservation equipment – Coravin, Bermar or Savr –and offer British bubbly by the glass. This promotes trial and upselling to bottles
- Carry cans for picnics and parties – Balfour Hush Heath Pink Fizz and The Uncommon Bubbly Rosé are great options
- Offer gift wrapping

### WILL ENGLISH FIZZ CONTINUE TO POP?

What's needed now is investment in marketing. First to establish the quality of home-grown fizz, then to help drinkers differentiate between brands. Many more restaurants need to offer English bubbly by the glass.

Consumers, confused by the different prices of Charmat and Traditional Method, need to be able to splash out with confidence. Fine food and fine wine elevate each other so indies have a big role to play in their education. It won't happen overnight but the future's cracking.



'TO HELP MITIGATE THE FINANCIAL SQUEEZE, THE UK WINE MARKET SHOULD FOCUS ON SMALL-SCALE AT-HOME OCCASIONS AND CELEBRATORY OCCASIONS TO DRIVE PURCHASES'

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# COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

Now's the time to start planning those festive displays and gifting options



**To anyone outside of retail, the thought of rummaging through the stockroom for Christmas display materials, or hunting down gift boxes and hampers, will seem ludicrous.**

**But, as you'll know, it's crucial to get on top of all of those little details now, to avoid an overwhelming state of panic when November (and the start of festive shopping) comes around.**

## DECK THE (FOOD) HALLS



**When it comes to displaying your wares, 'go big or go home'**

Abundance is key to selling the Christmas dream, says merchandising expert Anna Crickmore. "Your display should be fun, and engaging. It should make customers want to look all around themselves. And, importantly, it should be a treat and a delight. Go big. And then go bigger. Christmas is an event, and it should feel special."

### COLOUR IS KING

Green has never wavered from Christmas displays and should be incorporated in 2023, says Anna, who recommends shifting away from red, and into the pink range. "But not neon. Try more muted, Pantone shades."

If you really want to push the boat out though, Anna is all for using 'shoutier' colours – especially if your brand is more 'pop and contemporary' than traditional. "I adore using Indian garlands, using their strands to drip colour everywhere. They look quite beautiful. Especially if you can find the ones with bells on."

### EMERGING PATTERNS

"You've got to have a check," adds Anna. "I love a big gingham bow. Equally though, stripes are wonderful. Patterns will help bring depth to your displays."

### SAVE MONEY...GO NATURAL

You don't need to spend a fortune to bring the beauty of Christmas into your shop. Anna says a simple, effective display can be made with a bit of foraging. "Send a member of staff out to collect twigs, branches and holly (legally of course). Twigs look gorgeous hung with bunting. If you do have a budget though, I highly recommend making friends with a local florist to add some natural, fresh flowers to your foraged goodies, or to add in a swooping garland. Or, how about having your logo printed onto gingerbread houses, hanging internally from branches?"

Handmade, natural paperchains are also big for 2023.

### EFFECTIVE ART

Handpainted windows are an investment Anna thinks is worth making. "They represent the artisan nature of a speciality food shop."

### GETTING IT RIGHT INSIDE

Building your internal displays is just as important as using windows to lure in would-be shoppers. Anna says large wicker baskets and hampers for showing off your wares always prove a hit, and advises combining any lifestyle products such as cheeseboards and cake stands into the mix so you can upsell. "It's time to get your statement pieces out.

"Height is so important in merchandising," she says. "As is using your displays to tell a story. You want to build height up, and layer, introducing hard and soft fabrics and objects, making sure you make the floor around the display pretty too."




## PACKAGING CAN BE A GIFT FOR RETAILERS



**You've got the right products. Your shelves look stunning. But have you got your gift-wrapping service in the bag yet?**

Christmas can bring in revenue for retailers like no other time of year. Whether you are a small delicatessen or a larger food company, those who are on top of the gifting trends, and know what their customers want, will be bringing in business left right and centre, says Andrew Wilson, director of WBC.

"Not staying abreast of trends could mean losing out on a large cash injection," he adds.

### GO GREEN

The sustainable packaging market is growing fast to meet demands from eco-conscious shoppers. A study by Zion reported the market is set to reach the equivalent of £308 billion by 2028.

"Creating a sustainable range amongst a lot of non-recyclable, highly polluting wrapping will immediately give you a much-needed USP," says Andrew.

"For example, offering a pre-made hamper, entirely recyclable from the card hamper to the shredded paper, right through to gift tags, is a brilliant way to make eco-friendly shopping easy." Making your gift-wrapping options in store 'green' is a step in the right direction too – from card gift tags, to paper tape. "Retailers can inspire and educate customers about the importance of responsible consumption."

### MAKE IT PERSONAL

A recent study by the University of Pennsylvania revealed that experiential gifting is most popular these days for creating stronger emotional ties between gifter and giftee. While this leaves retailers stuck for how to compete, personalised hampers have become a popular choice, with the chance to offer a more meaningful option. Create pre-made gift boxes or offer customers the option to build their own hamper to make sure you've covered off the thoughtful gift trend.



### BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Customers are far more considerate around spending, and so retailers should always be offering different price points and value options to accommodate all budgets. Make sure to have different size hampers on offer, with gift boxes filled with your most premium items right through to your most affordable. Creating gifting options for all budgets means no matter who walks through your door or clicks on your online store, there is something for everyone.

### HAMPERS ARE BACK

During the pandemic, businesses faced significant challenges acquiring and maintaining stock, due to a lack of factory workers, shipping issues and various other factors. For retailers, the stock issues meant a lack of intricate design items such as wicker hampers or wooden hampers. The good news is production is back in full swing and wicker hampers are making a comeback. However, they are not the most affordable choice, so be sure to cover the trend whilst also ensuring you have a variety of value options available.



# GETTING AHEAD FOR CHRISTMAS

## Put in the groundwork now for a successful festive season

**COMMENTATORS**



**NICK CARROLL**
MINTEL



**HELEN DICKINSON**
BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM



**JOHN SHEPHERD**
PATRIDGES



**HOLLY ROGERS**
BIDFOOD



**CELIA HOLT**
HETHEL INNOVATION

We're over the halfway mark in 2023 now. This means the inevitable drive towards Christmas is underway, with research, sourcing and buying ongoing across the fine food retail and wholesale industry.

Getting these elements right, selecting stock driven by consumer desires and shopping patterns, is crucial to success. While trends are still on the cusp of emerging for the months ahead, there are some indicators coming through.

Topping the crop is the desire for value – something that's dominated retail in 2023 as the public and industry grapple with the soaring cost of living.

### SHARING IS CARING

**Darren Litton of Cocoba Chocolate in Kent says he is preparing for a surge in Christmas sales. This will largely, he predicts, be driven by what he calls the "soaring popularity" of hot chocolate and sharing boxes.**
Darren says consumers are loving hot chocolate spoons and bombes, with the company investing strongly in innovation in this area, releasing products that surprise and delight, including colour-changing unicorn bombes.
He adds, "Sharing boxes have always been highly sought-after during Christmas. Their versatility means they can be enjoyed on various occasions, serving as delightful party treats, and highly coveted treats."

"Christmas 2022 was no doubt a difficult period for retailers, with significant cutting back from shoppers in comparison to 2021," says Mintel's category director for retail insights, Nick Carroll.

And Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the British Retail Consortium agrees, "Retail's 'golden quarter' is a crucial time for the industry, with November and December alone accounting for a fifth of the year's sales. As with most years, we anticipate an uptick in spending in food and gifts as friends and families come together. "However, celebrations might be more subdued this year as squeezed consumers are forced to balance their festive spending with the high cost of living."

Nick says there are glimpses of positivity through sales data from 2021 and 2022, "The age-old ability of UK consumers to put aside economic background to celebrate did shine through, and in many ways, it was a far more positive period than was expected. "Looking to 2023, value will remain top of the agenda, and a more shapeless nature of demand will make retailers getting promotional periods right, in terms of both range and timing, more critical than ever."

Anecdotally, some have reported a boom in sales, as the price point in supermarkets levels with that of fine food retail. If food inflation falls in the last quarter of the year, these stores will have a job on their hands, finding innovative and attractive ways to retain this new wave of customers.

John Shepherd, of Partridges, says focussing on fresh, and having a deli counter filled with enticing, beautiful, artisanal foods that are the stable of fine food stores, should help a great deal.

"On the deli, cheese and charcuterie remain strong for us," he reveals. "And we are introducing more niche products in this area." Smoked salmon, John adds, is always a star for the London shop at Christmas and New Year.

"Christmas is still a traditional trading experience at Partridges. "Although Christmas puddings and hampers have been in decline recently, we are looking at introducing more fresh food hampers, and promoting a new selection of creative gift ideas, as well as revamping our range of panettone, which are very popular at present time.

"We have been through some difficult trading times in the past, and have often found diversity in the Christmas range a good way of expanding sales. Not every new idea will work, but some can prove to be transformational."

### Plant-based projections

Holly Rogers, research and insight manager at Bidfood, says she's seeing demand growing for vegan products, and fully expects this trend to continue. "Despite Christmas being traditionally associated with a variety of meats such as turkey, gammon and ham, meat-free options are not to be forgotten about this festive period. "A quarter of people we asked said that meat-free options would appeal to them.

"And this number isn't just made up of vegetarians and vegans. Many meat-eaters are looking to reduce their meat intake this year too, with health and sustainability being front of mind."

A recent report by Future Market Insights predicts the plant-based food sector will grow threefold in the next 10 years, with the rise of flexitarianism, and growing consumer concern around the climate and environment.

Certainly, there is huge investment in this arena, with constant NPD around products derived from vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and pulses.

Leading the way this Christmas is alternative proteins brand This, which has brought out three new launches, expected to fly off the shelves during the festive season – This Isn't Pork Mini Sausages, This Isn't Pork Sage & Apple Stuffing, and This Isn't Pork Pigs in Blankets – each of them aimed at "tempting even more meat eaters to trial and adopt plant-based food".

It seems investing in vegan this Christmas could prove an estute move for fine food retail.

> "Many meat-eaters are looking to reduce their meat intake this year too, with health and sustainability being front of mind"

### STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE



Spending wisely at Christmas will be a necessity for many this year, says Celia Holt of Hethel Innovation. While cash is tight, value for money treats will be high on shoppers' lists...and she thinks this will lead to consumers reaching for nostalgic, traditional products, for the feel-good factor.

Celia says she's beginning to see Christmas trends shaping in the following areas:

**COMFORTING FOODS**
Look out for retro flavours from bakery to confectionary and ice cream. Nostalgia is always key at Christmas as we look to recapture those treasured food memories. This year shoppers will be looking for gifts and menus that give comfort and joy.

**WELLNESS**
Christmas is a time of indulgence and feasting, but this year we will see a stronger lens on health and mindful eating and drinking. Products that boost, calm and lift the mood.

**SAVOURY BAKED GOODS**
At Easter we saw the cheese and chutney hot cross bun, so could Christmas be the turn of the savoury panettone?

**HOLA MEXICO**
Mexican spirits will be the flavour of the season in ready-to-drink tequila cocktails and the new kids on the block in the UK – mezcal and sotol.

**ENVIRONMENT**
Consumers are demonstrating their increasing concern for climate change and will seek out surprising, innovative new products that address their sustainability concerns.

# IN HIGH SPIRITS

## It seems Brits can't get enough of Mexican drinks

Has gin had its day? Will rum ever rise to the occasion to hit the top spot as Brits' go-to spirit? Or...is there a new kid on the block?

According to trendwatchers, the hottest drinks to stock this winter hail from Mexico, with sales of tequila and mezcal soaring during the last 12 months. According to the Wine and Spirit Trade Association, tequila alone saw volume sales rise by 83% in 2022 compared to pre-Covid levels.

Tina Connolly, brand manager for KAH Tequila and Rooster Rojo Tequila at distributor Amber Beverage UK says the old-fashioned image of the drink is disappearing, encouraging a whole new generation to explore drinks such as tequila. And the change is for good reason. "As consumers realise that 'proper' tequila – made using 100% Blue Weber agave – is like fine wine. Handmade and connected with the terroir, the land where the plants are grown."

Tina adds that the production of tequila is dependent on a natural, farmed product, cultivated in limited quantities, in a designated part of the world. "And this realisation has kick-started the trend towards appreciation of good tequilas. In the UK, for many people tequila was what gin had been 15 years before; harsh, unpleasant and with bad associations.

"Gin changed, and so did attitudes. Now it's the turn of tequila and the old image is rapidly disappearing as a general view, because the quality of liquid delivered by brands [such as ours] is so much better."

Despite the cost-of-living crisis, consumers are still going out to celebrate, and when they do, they're often looking to cocktails, with a reported 57% choosing mixed drinks on a night out. According to Tina, they're looking to try something new, beautifully-made, delicious and versatile – and tequila is increasingly fitting the bill.

"Margaritas are the obvious cocktails using tequila as a base, but for those celebrating at home who find the prospect of shaking and straining their drinks too daunting, it doesn't need to be that complicated. Using a great quality, 100% agave tequila as a base ingredient you can also serve up simple delights such as a Paloma, or even a tequila and tonic (TnT) with no fuss."








STOCK CHECK 2023 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



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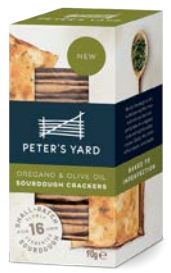
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BLACK BEE HONEY



**LEAH RILEY**
THURSDAY COTTAGE



**LAURA STRAPP**
COTSWOLD FAYRE



**HEATHER COPLEY**
FARMER COPLEYS



# FOCUS ON: JAMS, HONEYS AND SPREADS

We explore what consumers want from their sweet spreads in 2023, and how retailers can get creative to upsell them



You can't go wrong with a slice of toast smothered with jam, or a bowl of granola drizzled with wildflower honey for breakfast.

As Leah Riley, head of sales at Thursday Cottage, tells *Speciality Food*, "Jams and spreads will always be a popular choice for your toast in the morning. Both of my little boys are big fans of jam on toast and very partial to a jam sandwich."

"A lovely slice of toast with melted butter and a quality jam, marmalade or honey takes some beating," Heather Copley, owner of Farmer Copleys, adds.

## Getting creative for the upsell

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, and independent retailers are well-placed to cash in.

According to Laura Strapp, ambient buyer at Cotswold Fayre, "Breakfast has become more about fuelling your body, and this category very much fits in with having toast and adding to it with jam/honey etc.

"We have seen smoothies become more popular, with people adding honey to get natural sweetness. Or they're adding it to granola or natural yogurt. This creativity has really opened the category to new users."

Indeed, as Leah explains, "Consumers are far more creative than ever before, and our spreads, jams and curds are often used to bake delicious treats. Curds can be drizzled over ice cream, waffles and pancakes or used in the middle of muffins for an extra burst of flavour.

"If a retailer also has a café, they can promote the versatile use of jams and spreads by baking with them in their kitchen and advertising this on their menu, signposting that customers could recreate this treat at home as the retail jars are sold in the shop."

This is something Chris Barnes, co-founder of Black Bee Honey, has seen in retail with his honey varieties, as he tells *Speciality Food*, "With many people now moving away from using refined sugar in their cooking and baking, honey is becoming more widely used as a sugar replacement. We work with an increasing number of chefs who are choosing to use high quality British produce in their restaurants. They often use honey throughout the entire meal, and not just in desserts.

"By promoting honey as an ingredient that can be used in salad dressings, or as a marinade, as well as for sweetening baked goods, retailers can widen the appeal away from only the traditional uses. This, alongside the range and variety of flavours, gives a wider appeal."

Of course, communicating these messages in store is the secret weapon of the independent retailer. "Regular tastings in store can spark conversation and provide a good opportunity for staff to pass over information regarding recipe ideas," Leah explains.

"Retailers could ask questions such as 'Have you tried adding a big spoonful of strawberry jam to your gin and tonic?' and 'Did you know our curds create a delicious and easy to make no bake cheesecake?'"

By being creative, there is plenty of scope for independents to generate those all-important sales and show consumers the vibrancy of the fine food industry.

## Tradition vs innovation

The saying might be 'less is more', but when it comes to stocking jams, honeys and spreads, for Leah, the more variety the better. "I think if retailers stock a range of flavours this helps upsell jams and spreads, including some of the more unusual ones which the consumer may not have tried before," she says.

"For example, if a retailer has our Lemon Curd on the shelf next to our Cherry Curd and Blood Orange Curd, this will help draw the consumer in to try other flavours."

However, what consumers value the most is taste and quality. According to Heather, "There was a phase in this sector where everything had to be a strange flavour combination or have alcohol involved. I would say this is not necessary if the quality ingredients are there in the first place."

For her, it's all about, "Taste, taste, taste! Not tonnes of sugar. They are looking for something that makes their mouth water when they smell it, and it's not all about price, at least not in the farm shop industry. The products need to have a depth and vibrancy of colour, a delicious texture (rather than a thick set jam for instance), and a taste that screams what it says on the label."

With stricter health regulations coming into effect in the UK, and shoppers looking for 'better for you' options, high quality spreads with more fruit and less sugar are high on the agenda.

"Health and what ingredients are used in products is top of people's priorities as they look to make changes and educated in making healthier choices," Laura tells *Speciality Food*.

"In terms of emerging brands, single variety is important, it's all about the fruit, and mango flavoured preserve is out of this world. We stock Fearne & Rosie which is aimed at children and all about the fruit and less sugar.

"For our sector, customers expect to find a good jam, honey and spread offering and indies can do well by encouraging trial on these emerging new brands that are giving this category a new lease of life."

## The power of provenance

When it comes to what consumers want from their jams, honeys and spreads, the local appeal and farm to fork journey are also strong pull

> "Consumers are far more creative than ever before, and our spreads, jams and curds are often used to bake delicious treats"



factors that can't be ignored.

This is particularly evident across the honey industry.

Chris explains, "On the back of numerous reports of adulterated honey flooding supermarket shelves, consumers are becoming increasingly aware that not all honey is what it says it is – with many imported honeys containing sugar syrup and other foreign ingredients. At Black Bee Honey, we believe that everyone has the right to know where their food comes from and how it's made.

"Knowing exactly who made the honey and where means we can put that on every jar.

"The tamper strips on our honey jars have the name of the beekeeper and the location of their apiary (group of hives)."

Showing the farm to fork journey is extremely important to the team at Farmer Copleys.

As Heather tells *Speciality Food*, "All of our honey is from the hives on the farm and we have five beekeepers, including myself and Robert.

"People are able to see us on videos looking after the bees (on courses next year with visitors) and then us spinning the honey in front of them if it's a honey spinning day.

"It's all about people knowing where their food comes from, it genuinely is the field to fork or flower to jar story."

Telling these stories is key, and championing the passion that goes into creating high-quality products is what fine food retail is known for delivering to discerning customers.

> "Regular tastings in store can spark conversation and provide a good opportunity for staff to pass over information regarding recipe ideas"




## STOCK CHECK




### MRS BRIDGES SCOTTISH RASPBERRY PRESERVE

The best of succulent Scottish raspberries and Mrs Bridges traditional recipe make this the quintessential preserve.

**mrsbridges.co.uk**




### THURSDAY COTTAGE LEMON CURD

This creamy curd is made with lemons, butter and fresh free-range eggs, perfect as a spread or a baking ingredient.

**thursday-cottage.com**




### BLACK BEE HONEY BRITISH SUMMER

Multi-floral honey sourced during the summer months from apiaries in Somerset, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire.

**blackbeehoney.com**




### HAWKSHEAD RELISH STRAWBERRY & RHUBARB JAM

A jar that encapsulates summer, this Strawberry & Rhubarb Jam is fruity, sweet and sticky.

**hawksheadrelish.com**




### ODYSEA ORANGE BLOSSOM HONEY

A light golden yellow colour that turns warm orange as it catches the sunlight, this Greek honey is intensely sweet with delicate citrus and floral notes.

**odysea.com**




### JAM BOTHY RASPBERRY & GIN JAM

Hand-made the traditional way in small batches, the new jams from Gin Bothy are made using the fresh seasonal fruit of Scotland.

**ginbothy.co.uk**




### ROSEBUD PRESERVES SEVILLE ORANGE MARMALADE

Classically strong, rich, sharp and full flavoured, this marmalade is naturally set with unrefined cane sugar.

**rosebudpreserves.co.uk**




### THE LONDON HONEY COMPANY SHROPSHIRE HONEY

An old-fashioned, classic British summer honey from the clover pastures and wildflower hedgerows of Shropshire.

**thelondonhoneycompany.co.uk**




### FEARNE & ROSIE STRAWBERRY SUPER BERRY JAM

Bursting with natural fruity goodness, containing 70% fruit and 40% less sugar than your average jar of jam.

**fearneandrosie.co.uk**




### COTTAGE DELIGHT MANGO & PASSIONFRUIT CURD

Exotic passionfruit and beautiful mango are combined to create this deliciously creamy curd full of tropical fruity flavour.

**cottagedelight.co.uk**

# THE POWER OF CONDIMENTS & SAUCES

Discover why those humble jars on your shelves could be your secret weapon



**COMMENTATORS**



**LAURA ROBERTS**
LAURA'S LARDER



**MARIA WHITEHEAD**
HAWKSHEAD RELISH



**ATHENA LEE**
SHELFNOW



**BECKY VALE**
TRACKLEMENTS

Far from being an afterthought or simply something to dip chips in, condiments are currently experiencing a renaissance, especially in the fine food world.

As Rick Sheepshanks, founder of Stokes Sauces, explains, "We have always believed condiments are more than a dollop, spoon or squeeze on the side of the plate. Consumers are encouraged to add depth to gravy, richness to casseroles; to include, stir and a whisk to make ordinary food extraordinary on the plate."

This is something Maria Whitehead, director of Hawkshead Relish, strongly believes. "Condiments are there to enhance the dining experience and not to take over the main event, so they should be paired to add layers of flavour to a dish or meal and elevate the experience as a whole.

"Sauces, in particular, have really come to the forefront in the last few years. They're so easy to use, and versatile. Adding a touch of our Spiced Mango Ketchup, for example, to a curry makes a world of difference, bringing extra layers of complexity and zing."

One dedicated advocate of the importance of condiments is Laura Roberts, owner of Laura's Larder in Orpington. "They make up about 90% of my fridge and shelf space at home, much to the annoyance of members of my household who are constantly trying to find space for fruit or yoghurt or cereal. But they really do make a meal sing," she tells *Speciality Food*. "They are also perfect for the time poor and the snacker, guilty of it all."

## The sustainability factor

With sustainability a huge consideration for consumers, condiments are the perfect stock to uplift meals and help prevent food waste, while often being sustainable in their own right.

As Athena Lee, marketing manager at ShelfNow, explains, "One of the most effective ways to reduce food waste is by using up the ingredients we already have. By incorporating condiments, we can revive and repurpose leftovers, creating entirely new and exciting flavours. "Condiments can transform fridge leftovers into a delicious reinvention, ensuring that no food goes to waste."

With cost-conscious consumers looking for ways to make their money go further, condiments are certainly must-stocks for every fine food retailer.

According to Becky Vale, marketing director at Tracklements, "Condiments are by their very nature heroes of reducing food waste as their heritage lies in preserving the glut of the seasons. This is a tradition Tracklements is keen to continue and one of the reasons we make our ever-popular special editions, our Aromatic Medlar Jelly and our English Crabapple Jelly.

"More than that, condiments are the secret weapon of the larder, combatting waste wherever they're found by generously transforming simple dishes into sumptuous feasts and adding a swell of intense flavour to everything they accompany. They are the vivacious and big-hearted guest at the table, as at home on the side of a plate of cold meats or cheese as they are adding depth to a stew."

Another brand that believes this is Hawkshead Relish. "There are so many more uses for condiments, that we wrote a book called Embellish with Relish, packed with recipes which use our condiments as ingredients. It can be as simple as coating a salmon steak with Black Garlic Ketchup and rolling in sesame seeds, before roasting in the oven for a quick, simple and very tasty midweek supper."

## Going International

While traditional British favourites continue to dominate sales according to ShelfNow, ever since the pandemic changed the way consumers could explore different cuisines, international flavours have seen a huge boom.

"There has been an evident surge in the popularity of global flavours," Athena explains. "Our data reveals that Indian and Italian-inspired condiments have captured a significant portion of the market, accounting for around 50% of all condiment sales. Additionally, the demand for East Asian flavours has experienced remarkable growth in the past two years."



### TREND SPOTLIGHT: TURNING UP THE HEAT



**Tying into the 'Swicy' trend that marries sweet and spicy flavours, hot sauces are certainly enjoying a moment.**

Research from Tracklements revealed that 53% of shoppers are buying hot sauces at least every three months.

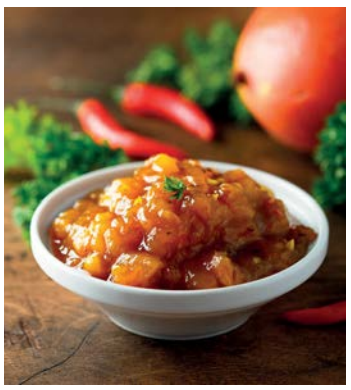
Laura Roberts agrees, "The spicy trend certainly isn't going anywhere, is it? Considering all the pressures of daily life and knowing that spicy products can give you a quick release from stress with dopamine – then perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. Everyone loves a hot sauce!"

What makes the trend so significant is that it ties in well with the desire for international flavours. As Laura explains, "Some brands seem to have just nailed both the 'hot' and 'international' trends. We, and many others, love Bombom's full range; the Gochujang, Kimchi Mayo and Ssamjang are wonderful to dip, dunk and marinate. And if you haven't seen Conbini's gorgeous-looking Japanese inspired sauces then check them out."









As Becky says, "There's a real sense of exploration with food at the moment, driven by social media and the need for adventure. We're seeing a willingness to experiment and try different combinations, although this takes the form of people combining known flavours themselves rather than necessarily wanting to be presented with obscure flavours.

"In condiments particularly, it's more about using established products in new and different ways rather than adopting unfamiliar and new flavours."

One fine food retailer who has certainly experienced this desire to experiment is Laura's Larder. "In store we've seen a real boost in international flavours with globally inspired condiments, sauces, oils, and seasonings bringing life to everyday meals," Laura tells *Speciality Food*.

"We've been enjoying a wave of texture and flavour offering complex blends of herbs, spices, speciality chillies, fruit, nuts, seeds and punches of umami. Think Japanese crispy chilli oil, Mexican salsa macha, West African shito sauce, Spanish romesco, Indian achaar, Filipino adobo and more."

One key way to encourage hesitant customers to steer away from their classic mayo or pesto sauces is to use exciting combinations on your in-store menu. As Laura explains, "We've been pimping our sandwiches at least once a week —taking inspiration from the Chinese rou jia mo, the Argentine choripán, and the South Asian paratha in our daily specials, really helping to showcase the products we sell. We find leaving one by the till with a "try me in today's special" sign really helps to boost sales."

## 3 BRANDS TO WATCH



Athena Lee, marketing manager at digital wholesaler ShelfNow, shares three best-selling sauces that hit the trends for fine food retailers

**PICO SAUCES PUNJABI KETCHUP**
Pico Sauces offers a range of hot sauces, chutneys, and ketchups that perfectly capture the authentic flavours of modern India. British customers are captivated by these condiments, as they deliver a unique and delightful taste experience. The thoughtfully packaged products beautifully showcase the vibrant and diverse flavours of Indian cuisine, allowing customers to explore and incorporate exciting tastes into their meals.

**2 FINGERS CHUNKY TARTARE SAUCE**
The condiments from the 2 Fingers range have gained significant popularity, thanks to their artisanal approach and global flavour inspiration. Crafted in small batches in West London, these chunky sauces are created with free-range egg mayonnaise, fresh herbs, and absolutely no artificial sweeteners, colours, or flavours.

**LONGBOTTOM & CO. HOT SAUCE**
This exceptional hot sauce is tomato and pepper-based, infused with ingredients like scotch bonnet chillies, red pepper, and tomatoes. The use of high-quality ingredients in the sauce enhance its versatility and ability to elevate a variety of dishes. The subtle umami undertones add an extra layer of depth and flavour, making it one of the most popular choices for those seeking a spicy and flavourful condiment.

> "Condiments are the secret weapon of the larder, combatting waste wherever they're found by generously transforming simple dishes into sumptuous feasts and adding a swell of intense flavour to everything they accompany"





For further information contact
Louise on **01206 508629** or **louise.barnes@artichokehq.com**


2023 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE
## STOCK CHECK




**STOKES BLOODY MARY KETCHUP**
This twist on the classic tomato ketchup is made with a dash of real vodka and a splash of Spicy Table Sauce for a touch of Bloody Mary spice.
**stokessauces.co.uk**




**TRACKLEMENTS MANGO & CHILLI CHUTNEY**
Gently roasted cumin, coriander seeds and fresh chillies give this boisterous version of a mango chutney a lip-tingling heat with mellow notes of spice.
**tracklements.co.uk**

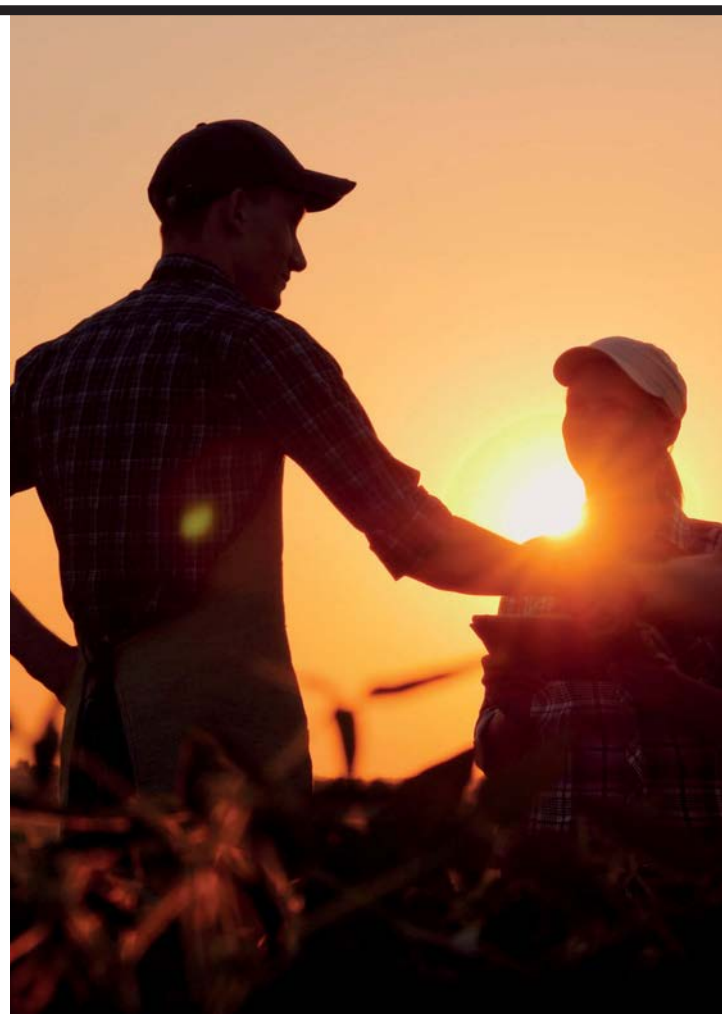



**HAWKSHEAD RELISH POSH PICKLE SAUCE**
Derivative of a traditional burger relish, this sauce is packed with dill, gherkin and onion, and balanced with seasoning and spices.
**hawksheadrelish.com**




**EATEN ALIVE SMOKED SRIRACHA HOT SAUCE**
Oak-smoked hot and sweet peppers are combined with garlic, and slowly fermented to develop tantalisingly complex flavours in this hot sauce.
**eatenalive.co.uk**

# HOW TO PLAY THE ‘GENERATION GAME’



The smash hit US TV show Succession gave a dramatised window into the world of family hierarchy and business planning. While it’s quite a distance away from reality for the majority of companies, some parts ring true. Chiefly that you need a plan (and a good one) to ensure the smooth running of operations, and continued quality of your products and services once you’ve decided to hand over the reins

## HAVE YOU CONSIDERED YOUR SUCCESSION PLAN YET?

Ed Savory, managing partner at Birketts, shares his professional advice on the subject of family business planning.

### WHY IS SUCCESSION PLANNING IMPORTANT?

Without a clear plan, businesses risk falling into disarray and potentially failing altogether. In fact, studies have shown that 58% of business owners haven’t even identified a possible successor. It’s also been found that only about 30% of family-owned businesses survive to the second generation and just 12% to the third generation.

That’s why a succession plan is crucial. By mapping out a clear strategy, businesses can continue to thrive long after their current leadership has moved on. This is particularly important in the food sector, which face challenges like thin profit margins, increasing competition, and ever evolving consumer tastes.



### WHEN SHOULD YOU START PLANNING?

The answer is now. It’s never too early to begin. Planning takes time - often years, not months. The earlier you start, the smoother the transition will be.

### HOW TO CREATE A SUCCESSION PLAN

This can seem overwhelming, since there is no one-size-fits-all approach. However, a few essential steps can get you started

**1 IDENTIFY YOUR OPTIONS**
Consider what you want to happen to your business when you’re no longer in charge. If your food business is family owned, will it be passed onto family members? Will you sell it to management through a management buyout, or to employees through an employee ownership trust? Alternatively, your business could be sold to a third party or private equity buyer.

**2 CHOOSE THE BEST FIT**
Once you’ve identified your options, select the best one for you and your business. This decision will depend on various factors, such as how long you want to remain involved, the extent you want to maximise value, and whether you have suitable successors in place. These factors should always be carefully considered.

**3 OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE**
Identify areas in the current ownership structure that may need changing or clarification to facilitate a smooth transition. Is there a balance in the ownership and control of the business? Are there any trustee shareholders? It may be that varying classes of shares need to be put in place or a group company might consider a reorganisation.

**4 SUCCESSION TRAINING**
Train workers and senior managers who have the potential to be future leaders.

**5 TAX PLANNING**
Consider tax planning strategies to minimise the tax impact of your succession plan. The key is to ensure you achieve the best tax treatment on a sale which is likely to be capital treatment and business asset disposal relief, or ensuring that business property relief applies on death.

Knowing where to start and how to implement a succession plan can be complicated and there are many factors to consider. That is why addressing these issues with a team of legal advisors to help can make all the difference.

> “By mapping out a clear strategy, businesses can continue to thrive long after their current leadership”

IN **2020** THERE WERE **4.8 MILLION** FAMILY **BUSINESSES** IN THE UK, BRINGING IN **£575 BILLION** IN ADDED VALUE **CONTRIBUTION** TO **GDP**

**SOURCE, IBF RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

### IS WORKING WITH FAMILY **WORTH IT?**

Indeed has some thoughts to consider before you take the leap to join the family business

#### THE PROS

- It’s easier to make decisions with people who share the same vision.
- Access to a job is almost a given with family.
- You’ll have prior knowledge of your colleagues – after all, you grew up with them.
- There could be a more relaxed working culture.
- You have the opportunity to work in a variety of roles and to gain experience in different responsibilities which will help build a rounded CV.
- There’s usually a strong ‘team’ mindset.
- It’s easier to trust family.

#### THE CONS

- There can be conflict which spills over from family life into the office.
- You need to be super disciplined.
- You need to take care not to exclude employees who aren’t part of the family.
- It can be difficult to manage the hierarchy.
- Promoting from within the family could put a bad taste in the mouths of non-related employees.
- You might get fatigued spending all day with your family – in and out of work.

# SPECIALITY FOOD

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**COMMENTATORS**



**JOHN CALLOW**
NORTHERN WINE SCHOOL



**LUCY WINWARD**
NEW HALL VINEYARD



**JAMES HAWKINS**
HAWKINS BROS



**JAMES LAMBERT**
LYME BAY WINERY



**SUSAN VAUGHAN**
RADLOW HUNDRED






# ENGLISH RED WINE'S TIME TO SHINE

The English sparkling wine market has exploded in the past decade, with quality often equalling, if not surpassing Champagne. But our shores' red bottles are not to be overlooked, say industry insiders

Britain is making wine. And, much like the fine artisan cheese market, finally the rest of the world is sitting up and taking note of what's being bottled in our vineyards. It's big business. According to Wine GB's most recent report (2021-22) investment in planting vines is up 70% over the last five years.

While Chardonnay dominates for versatility (as a stand-alone still wine, and essential factor in English sparkling wine), Pinot Noir follows in at second place, and is a huge part of the wider picture, especially in Kent where it's grown most abundantly.

Pinot Noir, like Chardonnay, is important to the increasingly popular fizz market, but a changing climate, with longer, warmer summers, has given many producers the confidence to experiment with still (and sparkling) reds. Although still red wine currently only represents around 14% of English wine sales (WineGB), this number is predicted to rise.

## English wine is in a 'golden age'

Now is the time for fine food and drink retailers to be looking more closely at English wine says John Callow of the Northern Wine School.

"It really is a golden age for wine made in the UK," John claims. Speaking of reds he continues, "There aren't as many grape varieties, but the ones that are being grown are very interesting. German grapes like Rondo, Dornfelder and Regent are especially suited to cooler, wetter climates and do well, with levels of tannin, and a colour and fruitiness we haven't really seen here before."

Pinot Noir is leading the way as the finest English red wine, says John, but retailers will have to fork out more, as its scarcity means pricing is often at a premium.

He suggests starting with an English-grown German grape varietal or blend, which prove reliably fruity, with a lower ABV than many other red wines.

"Rondo and Regent wines are delicate and do work nicely slightly chilled with a picnic, or a cold spread of cheeses, maybe alongside a pork pie. They have a crisp acidity that cuts through fatty food or anything with a bit of salt, and those kinds of foods will soften the wine, add body, and bring out its fruitiness."

When it comes to choosing English red wine, he says not to expect the same mouthfeel or body as a warm climate wine. "We're just not there yet. We don't have the weather to make plummy Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon. Look out for wines from 2020, which was a particularly dry year and a good harvest. I recommend the Bolney Estate Pinot Noir for a taste comparable to a good Burgundy. They've got the balance of price and quality right there."

## English red wine isn't a novelty anymore

Lucy Winward is commercial manager at New Hall, one of the UK's oldest vineyards, perched in the Crouch Valley, which is gaining pace as one of the hottest (literally) spots to produce wine in Great Britain.

The team have just committed to planting an additional 15 acres of red fruit within the next two years to meet demand for the vineyard's still red wines.

"Our signature grape is Pinot Noir Precoce," says Lucy. "This variety ripens early, so we're able to keep it on the vine for a long time, which is different to a classic Pinot Noir. It's a lovely grape not many people have heard of, but we've been growing it here for 25 years. It's a big, Germanic variety, with robust, super juicy grapes which make a lovely rose and red wines."

New Hall also grows Rondo, Regent, Triomphe and Zweigelt, but their expansion plan looks to focus on Pinot Noir Precoce and, says Lucy, some more tannic, 'heavier' red grape varieties.

"We have a view to growing these vines for the next 40 years. We're looking ahead to the climate, and the market style people might want in the next 20 to 30 years."

Lucy puts the success of Essex wines, particularly Essex still reds, down to what she calls the unique 'microregion' of the Crouch Valley.

"There are now 22 commercial vineyards established around the river Crouch, which is quite significant. A few things make this area unique. First of all, the heavy

> "English wine is nothing like what you might have talked about or tried 10 years ago. Everything is made in small batches, so our producers are fixated on quality"



clay soil has a high nutritional factor which retains moisture. So, in a year like 2022, when we had droughts, the vines survive.

"Then, we have the highest amount of growing days based on temperature, and the least rainfall in the UK, which is great for soft fruit."

Lucy adds that the area is generally frost-free due to the influence of the river. "And this all adds up to us being able to produce very very ripe fruit that's perfect for still wine."

She encourages retailers to try English red at the cellar door, saying, "It's just nothing like what you might have talked about or tried 10 years ago. In the English wine industry, everything is made in small batches, so our producers are fixated on quality. These are good farming families, giving a great deal of respect to their wines, and that care shows in the end result. It's not seen as a novelty, like it used to be."

**WINE GB** SAYS **10%** OF **WINEMAKING** GRAPES IN THE **UK** ARE FOR RED WINE. THIS FIGURE LOOKS SET TO **RISE** WITH MORE VINEYARDS **INVESTING** IN RED FRUIT AS **TEMPERATURES** CLIMB

In addition to flavour, Lucy says the ABV of English red wine is putting it in good stead with direct customers and merchants. "It's generally only 11-12% ABV. The market has been saturated with 14-15% ABV wines, and my customers say they find that a bit much. They're looking for something lighter.



"Certainly, Pinot Noir is having its moment right now."

## Pinot Noir is worth the spend...and buy in sparkling red for summer

James Hawkins, of merchant and winemaker Hawkins Bros in Surrey, says thinking 'outside of the box' will steer retailers in the right direction this summer.

James points to sparkling red wine, which he says is underrated in the UK, but beloved on the other side of the world. He explains, "Sparkling red is just great. Ask any Aussie. It's their go-to for a barbecue. A nice sparkling Shiraz. These wines are generally less tannic, because tannins and bubbles don't go brilliantly together.

"Albury Organic Vineyard makes a very nice sparkling red, which goes well with a chocolate brownie. Bolney have a Cuvee Noir made with Dornfelder, which I think is very good too."

James says sparkling red wines are a great choice for retailers to recommend to customers in warmer weather, particularly if they're grilling outside.

As for stills? He would advise seeking vintages from 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2022.

"Those were all good years for winemaking, and we don't often get a good run of years like that."

Pinot Noir flourished in the relatively dry, hot weather of those vintages, making for much better red wines than the UK has seen before. "They are all really rather good," James says. "I'd compare some of them to northern Burgundies or New Zealand Pinot Noirs."

Winemaker James Lambert, MD of Lyme Bay Winery, agrees Pinot Noir is going to be an important crop going forward, and says he's been looking to demonstrate the potential of English still wines since 2015.

"We've done that through a relentless search of pockets of land owned by growers who share the same passion as we do, looking for the highest degrees of potential ripeness, and wines that can really showcase the terroir."

James reflects that sales of English red wine are still only miniscule compared to the rest of the world but, "The climate is changing quickly, and the rate of change is impacting growing conditions in the UK, making them ideal for planting still varietals.

"There's so much potential for not just Pinot Noir, but other red varieties as well. With the right clones and the right grapes in the right places, the UK is uniquely positioned to produce world class Pinot Noir – we just need a little patience!"

## Wine could be a future staple for British farmers

Making the switch from traditional crops to vines is, quite literally, a growing trend, predicts Susan Vaughan, co-founder and director of new British brand Radlow Hundred.

She says her grandad would never have dreamed of putting vines in English soil, but that climate is having a steady impact on the industry, and she "very much" sees British wine growth as a potential staple for farming in the UK.

"As it stands, the last few years have been incredibly exciting for English wine. Sparkling is now firmly cemented as a category to be taken very seriously indeed. But we think the next chapter is going to be in still wine for the next few years. More specifically in the red wine category."

Susan continues, "Across the market, producers are starting to branch out from the Pinot Noir focus that has largely dominated the English reds scene. At Radlow Hundred we've planted a lesser-known grape, Rondo, that's intensely fruity and juicy, and holds a lot of promise for the years ahead."

Radlow Hundred has invested heavily in red wine, with the Rondo grape matched to their terroir by grower Robert Hancocks, who chose it for its resistance to English chills, and dominant cherry notes.

Susan says their Rondo 2022 is one of the few bottles of the single variety in that vintage in England, coming in light at 12% ABV.

She suggests retailers get to know the English red market now, adding that it's, "Incredibly inspiring to be on the cusp of an English wine revolution, whereby local restaurants and retailers can tap into vineyards only a few miles away."

The environmental impact of choosing English-grown wine, with reduced transport distance from vine to counter, is another factor she says should be considered.




## WHEN RED WINE IS... **BLUE**

### English reds might be on the up, but they're not all made from grapes

High summer is a busy time for Rachael Templeton and her family. While traditional winegrowers wait for grapes to ripen on the vines, ready for picking in late September and October, Rachael's harvest comes in a little earlier.

"We hand-pick around 600 tonnes in a season," she says, talking about her blueberry farm in Lutton, Northamptonshire.

Fruit wine is not uncommon in Britain, but Blue Aurora's range claims to be one of the first collections of blueberry wines in the UK – crafted in a bid to reduce food waste.

Rachael explains, "We're a big blueberry grower, supplying leading supermarkets. But the reason we started looking into wines is because we end up grading out 20% of the crop. Supermarkets only want the biggest, juiciest berries."

Smaller fruits, she says, often end up in the supply chain for juicing or freezing, but there was a consensus on the farm that wine could be an even more innovative way to use their fresh berries.

"We contacted Haygrove Evolution in Ledbury, to see if blueberries would behave the same way as grapes."

The result, Rachael says, was delicious, and consumers agree, with sales up from 600 bottles in year one of production, to an average of 10,000 per annum today, supplying farm shops, delis, wine merchants, and a selection of fine dining restaurants.

Three wines make up the range – Dusk, Midnight and Ice Wine – each with their own unique characteristics, and every one interchangeable for traditional grape bottles.

"Dusk," says Rachael, "is made in the same way as a white wine, so with no skin contact. Whereas Midnight's process is more like a red wine. The blueberries are pressed and fermented on the skins, giving richness and body. We add a bit of oak chip to that one for a lovely oak note. Our Ice Wine berries are picked fresh, because we won't have a frost when our blueberries are on the bush.

"We pick them, freeze, and press from frozen in the cooler months, typically January. It takes 2kgs of blueberries to make each 37.5cl bottle of our Ice Wine. It's a lot sweeter, and more concentrated, and makes a great alternative to Port alongside cheese. Or you can add it to sparkling wine."

Rachael describes Dusk as medium dry, crisp, fresh and fruity – comparable to a rose. "Midnight is medium dry with a bit more intensity, and has been likened to a Pinot Noir."

She suggests retailers point consumers in the direction of cheese or chocolate for pairing with Blue Aurora Ice Wine, adding that antipasti or tapas dishes are good bedfellows for Dusk, while Midnight is "amazing" with steak, mushroom or cheese.

"What we've created, with our range, is very versatile."



# FINAL CALL

As I write this column, there seems to be a spring in everyone's step as the warm weather breeds happiness.

There is plenty to be positive about in the sector going forward, with inflation slowly starting to decrease, and hope on the horizon for a better food system. We have begun to fall into the routine of early sunny mornings, long humid evenings and delicious fine food and drink. Cafés are spilling onto pavements, markets, food festivals sprawl across cities, and high streets fill with sun-kissed shoppers. With this comes a rose-tinted outlook on life – after all, everything feels better when the sun is shining!

While consumers are all busy soaking up the sun, now is the time to start Christmas planning – oh don't you love the world of retail? Summer is a wonderful time for independent retail, but we're ready to dive into the delights of festive fine food and drink – from artisan mince pies to gingerbread rum, and the heat certainly won't stop us!

Whether you specialise in local fare or traditional delights from the continent, Christmas provides a key opportunity for independent retail, and your customers will be looking for little luxuries – keen to offer something special to their loved ones. It's been a tough year for many consumers, and the power of premium quality food and drink and breaking bread with friends and family cannot be underestimated. As the festive season approaches, keep this in mind and take that extra step to connect with your customers – you never know how much it might mean to them.

*Speciality Food* will have plenty of tips and advice for you over the coming months, whether you're a new indie or established destination, so make sure to keep up to date with all our print and online content. Enjoy the rest of the warm weather while it lasts, and let's prepare to get festive all over again!

**We love hearing from our readers. Do you have a story to share or expertise to pass on? Please get in touch with courtney.goldsmith@artichokehq.com**

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**Next issue available:** September 2023

artichoke


# 5 MINUTES WITH
## STEVEN VAN MIDDELEM, FOUNDER OF FHIRST



**WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?**
In a different life I would probably be focused on looking into new ways, processes or products to create more natural options for people. Or perhaps I would be involved in non-conventional biodynamic farming.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?**
My first real paid job was when I was 16 and working at an established bistro/restaurant. I lost 22lb in weight in one month from all the running around and serving tables.

**WHAT INSPIRES YOU?**
It can be any action, small or big. But if I see people who transcend the so-called limitations in life or are passionately driven to change the status-quo, I'd say this definitely gives me a spark.

**WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?**
After university in Belgium, I moved to San Francisco to work in private equity and the industrial tech sector. This was a great experience but in hindsight, not my thing.

**HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?**
The last decade has seen many wonderful disruptions and alternatives in the industry, from plant-based and dairy-free to functional ingredients. Today we have a great responsibility towards the next generation. If we continue as we are, we have an estimated 60 years of farmable soil left on the planet. Today's fruits and vegetables already contain 90% fewer nutrients. Lack of organic soil content will eventually lead to serious challenges. It's great to see the many wide-ranging initiatives. We founded Planet FHIRST, donating 1% of our turnover to restoring biodiversity together with SUGi. Just like our gut microbiome, the living content of our soil determines the nutritional content of our food and overall health of every species.

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?**
I love the entire process from idea to consumption. It's about creating, manifesting and delivering an actual product which has a positive impact and genuine value to peoples' lives.

**AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?**
If there is something I don't like I still try to find the joy and grace in it. However, if I can delegate any tasks relating to administration, I'll be happy to do so.

**WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?**
There are a couple which all come down to our FHIRST's company motto 'choose life'. Most of us are all so tied up in our daily activities and problems that we forget to live. It's our 'FHIRST for life' where we celebrate the small acts and moments that enhance our lives.


SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

**The next issue of Speciality Food includes:**

- Speciality & Fine Food Fair Preview
- Christmas Puddings and Fruit Cakes
- Christmas Cheese
- Chutneys & Pickles
- Christmas Drinks
- lunch! Preview
- Plant Based
- Charcuterie



**CAFE BUYER MAGAZINE**

**with the next issue of Speciality Food**

**For more information please contact Louise on 01206 508629 or email louise.barnes@artichokehq.com**



# TRIED & TESTED




### BIONA ORGANIC GREEN CURRY COCONUT MILK

This organic aromatic coconut milk provides everything you need for a delicious Thai green curry all in one can. Medium spiced, yet creamy, with fresh flavours of coconut, chilli and lemongrass, your time-poor customers only need to add their favourite protein or vegetables. I whipped up a marinated tofu and vegetable curry that made a delicious and nutritious dinner in under 30 minutes, served on a bed of vermicelli rice noodles – what more could you want?

**biona.co.uk**

### DIRTEA CEREMONIAL GRADE MATCHA




DIRTEA's new Matcha Mushroom Super Blend enriches 100% pure, ceremonial-grade Japanese matcha – hand-foraged in the Shizuoka Region of Japan - with the healing and transformative functional mushrooms and adaptogens the brand is renowned for. Featuring a combination of lion's mane, turkey tail and tremella mushrooms, along with a touch of coconut milk powder and coconut sugar, this powerful blend has a mellow, sweet, and creamy flavour.

**dirteaworld.com**

### SEGGIANO CALAMARATA PASTA

This new pasta variety from Seggiano is made from a certified organic Tuscan wheat, and is slow-dried and formed using bronze moulds for a perfect consistency. As a self-confessed pasta addict (I currently have nine different varieties in my cupboard), this unique shape – absent from supermarket shelves – certainly hit the spot. It has a porous texture that soaks up sauce beautifully and provides a delicious bite. Tempt your customers to try this popular Neapolitan pasta cut with rich seafood sauces or any vegetarian alternatives.




**seggiano.com**

# THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Colin Nicholson, chef patron at Mingary Castle



Mingary Castle is perched on a picturesque promontory on the fringes of the West Coast of Scotland in Ardnamurchan Estate. The guests and our team can enjoy majestic views of the Atlantic Ocean from its original battlements with panoramic views of the peninsula. After travelling the long single-track road to the most westerly part of mainland Britain, everyone is in awe of the castle's dramatic exteriors and surrounding area. The castle is suited to a variety of guests, from historians or explorers eager to discover the landscape, to the foodie ones who wish to experience some of the best Scottish produce in our intimate dining room.

We are so lucky to live in Ardnamurchan. The jaw-dropping produce on our doorstep is second-to-none. We are blessed to have a community garden, local fishermen, local farmers and a great smokehouse just across the water in Tobermory. The advantage of being in a remote area is that everything we source to create our menus is fresh. We are certain of where it comes from and the methods that were used to obtain the produce – this way we are reducing our food miles and giving back to the community regularly.

Ted and Rachel run our community garden, just 10 minutes away. They help me source fresh vegetables, garnishes and fruits, which give me inspiration for our daily changing tasting menu. Our venison comes straight from the Ardnamurchan Estate during the season, and it is some of the best on the west coast. Sally from Tobermory Fish supplies us with beautiful smoked sea trout that guests can enjoy for breakfast with scrambled eggs from local farmers on a homemade sourdough crumpet, and smoked mussels that are a great accompaniment for the turbot dish.

Guests can often get a glimpse of our local fisherman dropping off a tray of prawns, lobsters or crab claws, which they will be enjoying during their stay with us. We also use Iain Stewart Fish Sales in Fort William for our seafood. Again, it is sustainably sourced and some of the best in the country. We have a good relationship with our local pig farmer who provides us with pork for our homemade sausages, and we use the pork loin on our dining and Sunday Roast menus.

> "After travelling the long single-track road to the most westerly part of mainland Britain, everyone is in awe of the castle's dramatic exterior and surrounding area"

PARTNER CONTENT

Garofalo



# THE ITALIAN BATTLE BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Are consumers looking for 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. Indeed, 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.

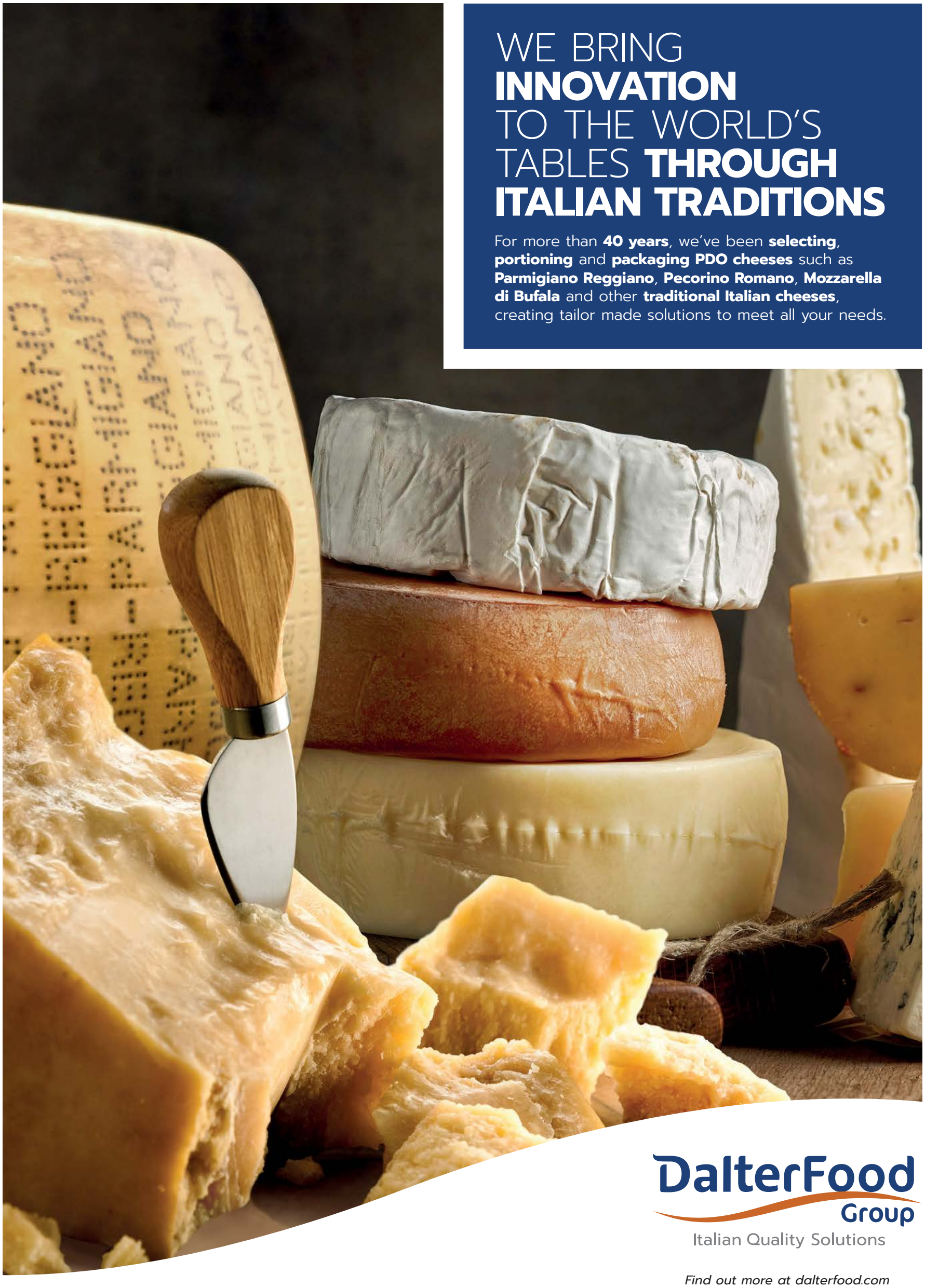
But with innovation ripe in the food sector and the younger generation driving key trends such as flexitarianism and sustainability, should retailers be refreshing their Italian offerings to reflect the trends?

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 Prosciutto di Parma. That's because we know the time, care and craft that go into making such products.

However, we also have a soft spot for innovation, and we must admit, some of us love pineapple on pizza. Aspiring foodies are experimenting with new cuisines, and incorporating far flung flavours into their cooking is a huge trend right now. Moreover, new brands are creating pasta from ancient grains and flours right here in Britain – it might not be traditional, but it's certainly incredibly exciting!

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





# WE BRING **INNOVATION** TO THE WORLD'S TABLES **THROUGH ITALIAN TRADITIONS**

For more than **40 years**, we've been **selecting**, **portioning** and **packaging PDO cheeses** such as **Parmigiano Reggiano**, **Pecorino Romano**, **Mozzarella di Bufala** and other **traditional Italian cheeses**, creating tailor made solutions to meet all your needs.

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Italian Quality Solutions

*Find out more at dalterfood.com*