

SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS

Yorkshire Tea Wordsearch

T A E C S T R O N G E G G A
E E E E E T E L T L O E R L
H A M B C E A C M M F A L L
T Y K I E A O P I A L L O G
E R A M L C T B E L R A N G
Y M B E A K K L C O L U L B
G O I E K E E D H G O L D I
U E R E S S T E G N G M A S
M O T K O I T C R T A P T C
A S A O S A L A S O B E A U
P O L B W H E F G P A T C I
E S O H S E I O Y A E M T T
R B O G P Y R R A E T I L Y
E I G H P C K B E T T L T R

Teabag
Biscuit
Milk
Loose leaf
Brew
Gold
Decaf
Strong
Mug
Yorkshire
Kettle
Teapot

Here's a wordsearch for your next tea break
– if you get a moment to sit down!
Stay safe & thanks for everything you're doing.
Love from everyone at Yorkshire Tea x



PONG CHEESE

MATHEW
MARCH-SMITH:
**HOW TO SELL
WELL ONLINE** P18



HAWKSHEAD RELISH

MARIA
WHITEHEAD:
**BOOST YOUR
BBQ SALES** P23



FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES

MICHAEL WEEDON:
**WHAT'S NEXT
FOR SMALL
BUSINESSES** P12



In this issue

4 John Shepherd,
MD of Partridges

6 Charles Campion,
food writer and critic

7 Sue Nelson,
The FoodTalk Show

30 Lawrence McCarthy,
Head chef

REGULARS

8 Product News

12 Viewpoint:
Michael Weedon, FSB

13 Trend Watch: Honey

16 Centre Spread:
Storecupboard
Essentials

19 Counterpoint:
Cheese Pairing

30 Last Words

FEATURES

11 Creativity in Crisis

14 How to Get Home
Delivery Up & Running
ASAP

18 Are You Ready For
A Successful Online
Business?

22 Welcome to Summer

23 Summer Sizzlers

26 The Speciality Food
Guide to Oils & Vinegars

27 Seasonal
Refreshment

28 The Rise of Goodwill



EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the May issue of *Speciality Food*.

We are all reacting to the outbreak of Covid-19 in the ways that work best for ourselves and our businesses, and so the situation looks slightly different for everybody you speak to. What has emerged as a shared experience, however, is the increase in collaboration, partnership and innovation – this has always been present in our industry, and is especially strengthened now.

In line with this, *Speciality Food* has produced a free digital magazine focused on maximising your online opportunities – valuable at a time when consumers are spending more time online than ever. Read it for free at specialityfoodmagazine.com/download. I hope you find it an inspiring and useful resource.

Alongside this issue you'll also find our annual *Cheese Buyer* publication, where we explore the world's finest cheeses and delve into innovative cheese industries in Europe and beyond.

Stay safe and keep in touch. Until next time.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR



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Tim Rycroft,
chief operating
officer, Food
and Drink Federation

The food chain's response to COVID-19 has been a triumph. Having spent decades building a lean, highly efficient supply chain that has delivered high-quality, safe, low-cost food and drink to UK consumers, in the space of a few short weeks we absorbed in some cases a doubling of demand with only some selective and time-limited shortages on the shelves.

Our long-standing working relationships with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), as well as the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department for International Trade (DIT) and the Scottish and Welsh Governments have grown even deeper during this crisis. There has been a deep, shared sense of purpose on both sides and an extraordinary energy to resolve the daily – sometimes hourly – challenges we faced.

Our next task is clear: designing and implementing the best possible return to full operation across food and drink manufacturing. This is a complex planning challenge, involving careful sequencing and the need to consider multiple inter-dependencies. Government support will need to be sustained

Coronavirus: how the food and drink industry has adapted to secure its future

The outbreak of Covid-19 has impacted producers, retailers, suppliers and distributors, but they're not giving up without a fight. Speciality Food has reached out to the industry for a first-hand look at how businesses have adapted, stepped up and diversified to not only survive, but thrive

as long as the market is not fully functioning, and we will need to move a large number of workers either out of furlough or back from where they've been temporarily re-deployed.



Jason Gibb, co-founder,
Bread & Jam

I always thought that the food and drink start-up community was an incredibly supportive, collaborative group, but the way we've reacted during the COVID-19 crisis has exceeded even my expectations. We've seen a huge number of service providers offering free support and up-to-date advice to start-ups – at Bread & Jam for example we ran a successful free daily webinar for two weeks

focusing on ways to mitigate the impact of the crisis – through online videos, blogs and forums like the FoodHub on Facebook.

We've seen several websites pop up that aggregate info on producers who are offering D2C deliveries, most notably Stock Up Small, and the Food & Drink Festival. And we've seen entrepreneurial brains flexed to the max with everything from shared fulfilment facilities (like Snaffling Pig's amazing offer to fellow brands) to clever marketing stunts like Signature Brew's 'Pub in a Box' which comes complete with snacks, music quiz, beer mats, an exclusive playlist and of course delicious beer. We've obviously been hit extremely hard, some may not make it, but many I believe will come out stronger.



Nikki Castley, buyer,
Cress Co

The demand for certain store cupboard items has taken us all by surprise, producers included. Flour, pasta and tinned tomatoes appear to be the 'essentials' of choice and it's been a struggle keeping all these items in stock. We are fortunate that we operate our own fleet of vehicles so not reliant on a third party, our deliveries out to customers have not been too badly affected and we have seen

some benefit from the reduced fuel prices.

As a business we've had to move quickly to adapt to the current situation, putting measures in place that allow us to still operate and offer as normal a service as possible for our customers. Much has been asked of our entire team who have more than stepped up over the last few weeks – we are proud to be doing our bit to keep the supply chain moving, supporting the many retail customers that have remained open during this difficult time.

Producers, retailers, suppliers and distributors are meeting the challenges of the pandemic by diversifying and adapting; none more so than the independent food and drink retailers who are working so hard to be accessible to the communities they serve, ensuring the safety of all those in front and behind the tills. Many of those retailers are now offering on-line ordering, collection and delivery services, they have had to adapt to survive. My hope is that these businesses will continue to be supported by their customers' existing and new long after this crisis is over.

“The fine food and drink industry is meeting the challenges of the pandemic by diversifying and adapting; none more so than independent retailers”

**Spot the
Difference**

Here's another tea break puzzle. Can you spot the 10 differences in the Yorkshire Tea landscape?



“Whenever normal returns, it will be wonderful”



**JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES**

Out of all the articles I have written for *Speciality Food* this has been the most difficult. It is not easy to write about such painful experiences that remain ongoing. For us at Partridges the Coronavirus period started on Friday 6th March. It was the first day of panic buying with sales up 26% on the previous year and customer numbers up 16%. This trend continued over the weekend of 7th and 8th and over the following two weeks, eventually slowing down on 22nd March. It was during the latter week that we recorded our highest sales ever, over 73% above the same week in 2019 - outstripping Christmas week – although customers were now down by 28%, but average spending rose over the month by 40%.

Every item we had on the shelves sold, with the emphasis on pasta, rice, eggs, flour, sauces, bread, biscuits, chocolate, water, wines, fruit and veg and delicatessen items. Shelves were becoming empty and staff were significantly reduced as Government guidelines directed.

By week commencing Monday 23rd March we had closed the café and the patisserie counter (cakes being an area where sales declined) and consolidated the deli. We suspended online orders

and stopped local deliveries. On one day alone more than 10 members of staff were absent and it became imperative to record the reasons – self isolating, shielding or, for various reasons, choosing not to attend. It was a week of chaos and even some suppliers requested payment upfront before delivering. There was the added pressure of enforcing the two metre rule, limiting customer numbers, reducing trading hours, answering the ever-ringing phones, encouraging card payments only and getting the staff to wear face masks and gloves.

By the week commencing March 30th we had reached a degree of stability. There was a reduction in sales of about 10% from last year, but some staff were returning and supplies were increasing. We resumed online deliveries (with over 100 orders on one day) but with the caveat of delay, and we restarted deliveries, albeit doorstep only.

It is sometimes a challenge to maintain morale. But there are positives. The staff have been brilliant and the bond with customers has been strengthened. Many have expressed gratitude to us for remaining open. We are still trading unlike other retailers, the business rates abolishment for one year has been a lifeline and we will of course get through this.

My main longing is for things to return to normal – the very same normal I used to complain about in these articles, although in some ways it may never be the same again. But whenever normal returns, in the words of Daniel Defoe, “it will be wonderful.”



Farm Shop & Deli 2020 award winners revealed online

The Farm Shop & Deli Show has been postponed to 7th-9th September due to Covid-19, but the announcement of the winners of the Farm Shop & Deli Awards still went ahead via social media on 30th March. Spanning over 11 different categories, the awards recognise the best speciality retailers across the UK.

The coveted Retailer of the year prize went to Andy & Kathy Swinscoe at The Courtyard Dairy, who also scooped Cheesemonger of the Year and the North West regional title. Andy Swinscoe said, “We were thrilled, it’s such a great achievement and completely unexpected. It’s a great boost to us and the team, especially in these uncertain times; something to smile about!”

Also highlighted was Welbeck Farm Shop, which won both Small Retailer of the year and were the Midlands regional winners, and The Crieff Food Co in Perthshire, who won three awards including Newcomer of the Year.

Broadcaster, journalist and chair of judges Nigel Barden commented, “The quality of the finalists has shone through in recent weeks as they have become even more crucial fulcrums of their communities, championing our artisan food and drink producers, farmers, bakers and fishing folk. They’ve also adapted quickly to the pandemic by delivering goods and making payment online, or over the phone, easily do-able and helpful to the consumer. Also the importance of the existing online food and drink retailers has been highlighted and it’s likely that the traditional way of shopping has changed for ever. Our finalists have been at the forefront of providing the finest of British produce to appreciative and increasingly thankful customers and it’s a privilege to salute and acknowledge them.”

THE WINNERS ARE:

BAKER OF THE YEAR
Lovingly Artisan, Cumbria

BUTCHER OF THE YEAR
Brace of Butchers, Dorset

CHEESEMONGER OF THE YEAR AND NORTH WEST REGIONAL WINNERS
The Courtyard Dairy, North Yorkshire

DELICATESSEN OF THE YEAR AND SOUTH EAST REGIONAL WINNERS
Panzer’s, St John’s Wood

FARM SHOP LARGE RETAILER OF THE YEAR AND SOUTH WEST REGIONAL WINNERS
Strawberry Fields Farm Shop and Restaurant, Devon

FARM SHOP SMALL RETAILER OF THE YEAR AND MIDLANDS REGIONAL WINNERS
Welbeck Farm Shop, Nottinghamshire

FISHMONGER OF THE YEAR
Cross of York, North Yorkshire

FOOD HALL OF THE YEAR AND SCOTLAND REGIONAL WINNERS
The Crieff Food Co, Perthshire

GREENGROCER OF THE YEAR
K.D.Davis & Sons (The Greengrocers) Ltd, South Yorkshire

ONLINE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
Dukeshill Ham Co Ltd, Shropshire

VILLAGE STORE / LOCAL SHOP OF THE YEAR
Fittleworth Stores, West Sussex

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
The Crieff Food Co, Perthshire

RETAILER OF THE YEAR
The Courtyard Dairy, North Yorkshire

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TALKING POINT: STAFFING

Covid-19 has impacted independent retailers across the UK, with some having to make difficult decisions regarding staffing. Many retailers have been able to turn the direction of their businesses around and explore new avenues, changing the roles of current employees and in some cases taking on new staff. Speciality Food spoke to two retailers about how their teams have come together during this time.

WILL DOCKER, FOUNDER OF BALGOVE LARDER:



We had a major case of all hands on deck in the run up to the lockdown and a week of being extremely busy while the supermarket shelves were empty and their supply chains were struggling. The team had to work long hours - they were amazing at keeping up and ensuring our shelves were fully stocked. We brought the team in from our café and Steak Barn to help supplement our usual shop team.

The business then had to change quickly to ensure we could keep up with demand from online orders. We have had an online shop for the past six years, but we have seen a huge increase in sales by several hundred in the past few weeks and it's never easy to adapt to that kind of change to a business. We had to call in a team to handle the local deliveries and the packing while also keeping the shop open for business. Fortunately, we had a team to draw on from the parts of the business we had to close so we could be more dynamic than if we'd had to bring in new staff and train them up. The team

have been utterly amazing at putting in serious hours to make these changes and keep the business going.

EMMA MOSEY, CO-OWNER OF MINSKIP FARM SHOP:



When PM Boris Johnson announced the national lockdown, we were forced to make a decision concerning the fate of our shop and, most importantly, our amazing new café that was due to open on 1st April. With all the café staff already hired and ready to join the Minskip Farm Shop family, we had the choice between making all the staff redundant and risking the future of our business, or trying to come up with a new business to support the staff we wanted to protect.

After a brief business meeting over our kitchen table, we decided to keep them on by launching a home delivery service instead. Being torn between financial issues resulting in the closure of the café (or rather the non-opening), and the unfair situation that the café staff would be victims of, we still believed that providing a local and quality delivery service was the best thing to do.

We are now proud to offer our local community, especially the at-risk and elderly, the opportunity to order fresh food and produce from our farm shop that gets delivered straight to their doorstep. This service is experiencing tremendous success, averaging 100 deliveries a day and hundreds of orders each week, and has allowed us to keep on all staff members and even hire new staff to help us deal with the constant influx of orders.

“The fine food and drink industry is meeting the challenges of the pandemic by diversifying and adapting; none more so than independent retailers”

Contactless limit increased in light of “extraordinary circumstances”

The limit for in-store contactless card transactions has been increased as a response to the Coronavirus crisis. In order to reduce the physical contact required for PIN entry the limit has increased from £30 to £45.

For Will Broome, CEO of Ubamarket, this is a welcome development in the spirit of convenience and hygienic shopping, and he predicts a wider move towards contactless shopping in the future. He says,

“E-commerce has been around for a long time and it's certainly here to stay, but in grocery, it's still only a tiny percentage of all shopping transactions. Putting it simply, people prefer to shop for groceries in store. However, there are frustrations with the in-store experience as it currently stands (in fact 66% of us are frustrated by one aspect or another) so a slick, frictionless and more personalised and hygienic experience is required.”

New CBD certification initiative launched

● **The Association for the Cannabinoid Industry (ACI) has outlined plans for a CBD safety initiative**

● **It highlights three tiers: being certified, validated and authorised**

● **“The UK is ready to lead the global CBD industry”**

The Association for the Cannabinoid Industry (ACI) has outlined plans for a new CBD safety initiative, exactly one year before the FSA's novel food regulations come into force.

The initiative is part of the ACI's vision of a sustainable future for the cannabinoid industry, as well as giving retailers and consumers reassurance regarding the safety of CBD products on UK shelves following a period of distrust. The ACI is working with toxicology experts to compile the necessary data to build robust Novel Foods authorization dossiers for ACI members.

There are three tiers to the initiative:

TIER 1 – CERTIFIED

An ACI member has proven to comply with the ACI's 7 pillar charter: they have passed an ACI audit which verifies that they operate to the best manufacturing standards. Companies will start displaying this mark from late summer 2020.

TIER 2 – VALIDATED

A Novel Foods application must be validated by the FSA and/or the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority). Support during this process will be provided by the ACI. This is legally required in order for products to remain in the UK market after 31st March 2021. This should be gained by some companies by the end of 2020.

TIER 3 – AUTHORISED

When a company's Novel Foods application has been authorized by the FSA and/or EFSA, certification will be granted and subject to annual review.

Dr Parveen Bhatarah, regulatory lead at The ACI said, “The UK has the necessary skill sets and talent in chemistry, agriculture, international business, and the regulatory requirements of the cannabinoid industry. Especially when it comes to CBD, we have the knowledge needed, from growing, to extraction and creating finished formulations. Consumer safety is the key for the CBD sector. The UK is ready to lead the global CBD industry.”

Dr Andy Yates, pharmacy lead at The ACI added, “It's been clear that retailers and consumers don't have complete faith in CBD products that are currently for sale in the UK. The ACI's Certification is a simple way for retailers and consumers to be sure that the CBD products they are stocking or buying are complying with or working towards all of the relevant regulations.”

Consumer priorities change

The world is awash with people adapting to a slower pace of life amidst global restrictions on movement. And while most people initially bemoaned the lack of freedom, it seems many are now not only adapting to but appreciating what's being described as ‘the new norm’.

From adjusting the way they shop and what they shop for to spending

more quality time with family, people are enjoying a more relaxed routine – and it seems these new habits could be carried over post-Coronavirus.

According to a recent YouGov poll of 4,343 Brits, 54% of people hope to make changes to their own lives and for the country as a whole when the pandemic comes to an end. What's more, 42% said they have an increased appreciation for food and

other essentials, with 38% cooking from scratch more often.

The survey was commissioned by the RSA's Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, together with The Food Foundation food charity. The findings are perhaps unsurprising given the constant media coverage of people shifting their priorities and stripping back their lifestyles to something simpler.

For more on this story visit specialityfoodmagazine.com.

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“Food and drink retail will never be the same”



CHARLES CAMPION

As the public becomes more and more beleaguered, and our magnificent NHS locks horns with the Coronavirus, one thing stands out like a sore thumb – food and drink retail will never be the same again. What's more, there's a real risk that some of the modest steps taken forward by the food and drink industry in the last decade will evaporate.

On the home front, this is the year of the freezer. I have a loyal chest freezer so crammed that its Pleistocene layers merit excavation by Tony Robinson's Time Team. Chest freezers mean out of sight out of mind... until you want to eat something. Only then do you wonder why you kept the sloes you picked in 2018. There is also a frost-burnt rainbow trout, board-stiff – the product of a long-ago successful family fishing trip. Setting aside the resolutions to use the freezer more diligently, let's close the lid and tiptoe away.

Out in the real world, contactless is likely to be a winner in the post-viral landscape. Contactless cards can mean a blissful easing of paperwork and cash handling. Do you remember lunchtime spent queuing in the bank with a wodge of cheques to pay in? Never again... Or there's the lockdown-driven, booming

torrent of home deliveries – do you remember the time when people stayed in for several days for a single package? In the 1980s we were encouraged to buy a storage locker for the back door with multiple keys, despite which many, many parcels vanished on that last journey. Do you remember when our efforts to find a planet-friendly alternative to those flimsy plastic shopping bags came good? .

And what kinds of food and drink will you find on the display shelves this autumn? Will bread revert from the sourdough boule to the Chorley Wood sliced white? Will stressful times mean that foodie shoppers rein in their love of the exotic – will everything be safety first? Perhaps customers will see at last that shopping is the best way of supporting local independent businesses and turn to trusted brands and trusted shops. The rampaging virus focuses the mind and every product will get unusual levels of scrutiny, with some retailers viewing this as a “clean slate” or a “re-brand” opportunity.

No one has ever seen anything quite like the current worldwide murrain, but sightings of the first pale shoots of recovery may be coming through. Although it was an enthusiastic commentator who claimed that we are entering a “New Age of Retail”. Optimism is commendable, but he may have overdone it a bit. Those of us of a certain age (mainly the serried ranks of the lockdown contingent) will be puzzled. We make up the generation for whom Corona will always be the name of a bilious, neon-coloured, fizzy drink that comes in big pointy bottles.

Support launched to help British farmers in the wake of flooding and Covid-19

● £6 million in funding will be made available to farmers affected by flooding earlier this year

● Environment Secretary George Eustice also confirmed intentions for the ‘three crop rule’ to be relaxed

● NFU launches online service to build an up-to-date picture of the impact of coronavirus on farmers and growers

Defra has announced new measures to help farmers recover from recent storms and flooding across the country.

An extension of the Farming Recovery Fund will ensure that £6 million will be made available to farmers affected by February flooding. The funding will be put in place to help those in parts of East and North Yorkshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire and Herefordshire.

Environment Secretary George Eustice also confirmed intentions for the ‘three crop rule’ to be relaxed. The crop diversification requirements were brought over from EU law after 31st January and require farmers managing more than 30 hectares of arable land required to grow at least three different crops. The rule is set to be relaxed for 2020 with some farmland

being flooded.

Mr Eustice said, “I have seen first-hand how devastating the recent floods have been to people and communities. For farmers, the costs can be overwhelming, which is why we have extended the Farming Recovery Fund to help those affected by exceptional flooding get back on their feet.

“The Three Crop Rule is not practical in extreme weather events when farmers need to plan their spring cropping. Applying a blanket derogation for this year is the best way to reduce bureaucracy and leave farmers free to get on with farming.

“I’m also aware that the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19) is causing other difficulties for the farming community. The Rural Payments Agency is working tirelessly to ensure farmers have access to all the guidance they need and we are exploring all options to ensure the

right support is available in the coming weeks and months.”

The National Farmers Union is also working to ensure that UK agriculture is being supported in the wake of Covid-19. The organisation has launched an online service to build an up-to-date picture of the impact of coronavirus on farmers and growers. The website will be signposted as part of the Government's Covid-19 business support communications. The organization is representing the entirety of UK agriculture and horticulture as a national response for the Government, informing ministers of the key issues arising as a result of the outbreak of Covid-19 and ensuring that businesses within these industries are heard.

NFU President Minette Batters said, “We are living and farming through unprecedented times and it is vitally important we all work together to build a clear picture of the issues arising in food production and work with the Government, so ministers can respond quickly to resolve them. I’m constantly and acutely aware that our industry cannot be mothballed like other sectors, whether it's ornamentals or liquid milk, farmers and growers are producing perishable products, all of which have a finite shelf life.”

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Government unveils Future Fund to help start-up businesses

The Government has pledged to support UK SMEs as part of a wider £1.25 billion Coronavirus package. Chancellor Rishi Sunak has announced a £500 million 'Future Fund' loan scheme for high-growth firms impacted by Covid-19, as well as millions in grants and loans for smaller businesses focusing on research

and development.

The Government will provide companies with up to £250 million in loans between £125,000 and £5 million, matched by private investors. The £750 million of targeted support will be available through national innovation agency, Innovate UK's grants and loan scheme.

Businesses diversify during Covid-19 outbreak

● **Businesses across the UK have adapted quickly to the ever-changing circumstances to provide essential services for those most in need**

● **"The most important thing is trying to help everybody around us so that we can all get through this together"**

● **"Putting something back locally has always been part of our motivation for building the distillery and our brands"**

Hannah Kinston and John Davies, the founders of British Food Box, had been supplying cheese and butter to local pubs, retailers and restaurants but lost business overnight due to required closures. The pair have opened a pop-up shop on the farm, have switched to a home delivery service, and are delivering essentials to vulnerable members of the community within a 10-mile radius.

Hannah said, "Overnight we sat down and we listed all the aspects of our business and how we thought the Coronavirus may affect them. We then looked at what we could do over this tough period for us all that would bring a large benefit to our community. The most important thing is trying to help everybody around us so that we can all get through this together."

Several distilleries have been utilising their supplies of ethanol and switching production to create much-needed hand sanitiser. Wirral-based gin company Tappers Gin has

also pledged to set aside a portion of all proceeds so they can produce, and then donate, sanitiser to front line workers and others most in need during the crisis.

Founder and MD Dr Steve Tapril explains, "We originally thought about fundraising for the hospital and others but it was obvious that money wasn't the issue – people needed sanitiser. We settled on the idea of retailing 200ml bottles on our website and putting a portion of the proceeds to fund donations to those most in need. Our main objective at the outset was to donate in bulk to Arrowe Park Hospital. Once everyone became aware of what we were doing, we have been inundated, and it has been heartbreaking to hear about the struggle that people are facing. There is a two-week turnaround time for online orders, and we have sold approximately 800 in 48 hours of the 1,000 bottles we had available to us. We are desperately trying to find more."

Scammers target Yorkshire farm shops, causing huge losses

North Yorkshire Police has warned local businesses of reports of meat suppliers and farm shops in the county being targeted by scammers.

The fraudsters are placing large quantity orders over the phone and then paying for the goods using stolen credit card details.

North Yorkshire Police's tips for protecting your business from a scam:

- Treat all calls of this type with great suspicion, do not supply goods to anyone without verifying their identity first. Treat them as you would anyone trying to set up a credit account.
- Often the cards used have been from American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand banks, so be vigilant for this.
- Always ask for payment by bank transfer.
- Request trade references from new customers.
- Instruct couriers and delivery drivers to only deliver to a shop or similar business premises.
- Remember that even once you have cleared a credit card payment through your account, that does not mean you will not receive a charge-back demand from the credit card company.

FDF partners up with job recruitment apps

The Food and Drink Federation has teamed up with job recruitment apps Placed and SonicJobs in a 16-week partnership in order to share potential job opportunities. The Covid-19 crisis has resulted in many workers facing redundancy or placed on furlough.

Nicki Hunt, director of membership and commercial engagement, said, "The food and drink supply chain employs so many talented people, the hidden heroes who keep the country fed, and during challenging times such as these it's important we can support one another in whatever way possible."

"The doom and gloom is hard to ignore"



SUE NELSON

As I write, the dreadful scourge of coronavirus has taken 4,300 lives, with deaths on course to double every day until it will flatten out and presumably diminish. Meanwhile our shopping habits and enforced social distancing when in a retail environment have drastically changed in a way that I never thought possible.

The doom and gloom is hard to ignore, with the mainstream media talking about nothing else and always the worst scenarios and most tragic situations. In many ways that is understandable, but I have witnessed so many acts of kindness and consideration in the past couple of weeks. It feels as if my local community is really coming together and, for the first time ever, is hugely appreciative of the retail workers helping us to stay fed.

Notes have been popped through letterboxes of the elderly by neighbours offering to chat on the phone or buy supplies, even when they have no clue as to their name or family circumstances. Presents of flowers, magazines, books and home-grown vegetables have been left outside neighbouring doors.

An army of volunteers are making scrubs for doctors, sending spare masks to hospitals and making hand sanitiser from chemicals. Retired doctors and nurses are returning to work without a second thought for their own welfare.

The Royal Voluntary Service, under its Good SAM campaign, appealed for people to register as Volunteer Responders to deliver food and pharmaceuticals to those most at risk who need to stay safe and well at home. They were hoping for 250,000 to sign up, but achieved a phenomenal 750,000 in the first couple of days. They have had to close applications so they can process the mountains of

submissions they received.

Technology is playing its part too, with street WhatsApp groups sharing photos, news, recipes, humorous videos and simply touching base to make sure everyone is OK. Families and friends are holding virtual dinner parties and celebrating anniversaries and birthdays via Houseparty and Zoom.

It is clear that getting access to food and drink has been taken for granted for decades. We have been used to wandering into a store and getting practically anything we want and with a huge variety of choice. With restaurants, pubs, cafés and takeaways closed, presumably those people who have not really cooked before are now participating in 'cooped up cooking' every day of the week. Google searches have wildly increased for making bread, avoiding food waste, freezing leftovers and what you need in a pandemic pantry. Suddenly, food is at the heart of everything we do, and local suppliers are key to keeping us all going.

When this is over and we get back to normal - hard to imagine just now, but we will - there will be a recognition for the very important role our local food producers play and a new appreciation for local food shops. Then I believe the general public will go out of their way to support their independent stores in a way they have never done before and quite rightly so.

Sue Nelson presents the FoodTalk Show with Holly Shackleton foodtalk.co.uk

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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Garofalo launches fresh-filled pasta range

New from Garofalo is a selection of fresh-filled pastas developed with Italian fresh pasta maker Bertagni. Made using natural ingredients combined in a refined way for a true taste experience, the pasta is a combination of a generous 60% filling and fresh pasta made with select flour, high-quality semolina and Italian free-range eggs.

The five fillings in the range include Garofalo Burrata & Nduja Mezzaluna; Raviolo Caprese; Buffalo Ricotta, Porcini & Truffle Mezzaluna; Ricotta & Sicilian Lemon Zest Girsale and Prosciutto Di Parma Tortellino.

Garofalo's UK marketing manager

Sally Assinder says, "Adding a range of Garofalo fresh filled pasta to the portfolio of ambient pasta and sauces in the UK is an exciting challenge for myself and my colleagues. For the initial launch there are five different filling choices, all typically Italian flavours including Ricotta and Sicilian Lemon, Burrata & Nduja and Buffalo Ricotta, and Porcini & Truffle. With the Garofalo signature logo on each pack the fresh pasta we use is of course going to be top quality – it's made using Italian pasteurised eggs from free-range hens and selected flour."

pasta-garofalo.com



Snack brand enters the breakfast category

Snack bar brand KIND is entering the on-the-go breakfast category with its brand new Breakfast bars. Available in three variants – Blueberry Almond, Peanut Butter and Honey Oat – each soft-baked bar is gluten-free and features a base of five wholegrains: oats, millet, buckwheat, amaranth and quinoa.

UK marketing director John McManus comments, "We know there's a huge opportunity for us here in the UK to bring our expertise to the on-the-go breakfast category. Research shows that 30% of us skip breakfast because of lack of time (Source: *The Grocer*) and we've created a premium product that is not only convenient, but delivers on health and taste too. We're really excited to see our latest launch roll

out nationwide from next month, and it's fantastic to have such strong support from our retail partners."

kindsnacks.co.uk



Beef jerky company welcomes new additions

Devil's Wrath and Teriyaki are the latest products in Trailhead's range of beef jerky. The latter is a Japanese-inspired jerky which joins Black Garlic & Ginger to create Trailhead's newest Collection, The Gourmet Ones. Devil's Wrath also joins existing flavour Spicy Chilli & Hot Smoked Chipotle in The Hot Ones Collection.

Trailhead sales manager Emma Morris says, "The extreme heat and adventurous flavours used in Devil's Wrath present a fiery experience for those who like a challenge, whereas our Teriyaki jerky delivers a real gourmet experience, using Japanese-inspired flavours. The hand-crafted marinades used in these distinctive flavours, along with our use of PGI Welsh Beef, provides a premium, protein-packed snack, perfect for independent retailers."

trailheadfinefoods.co.uk

Cider launch adds "new dimension" to Salcombe Brewery

Salcombe Brewery Co. has launched its new Ocean Cider to its award-winning range of handcrafted beers. A premium full-bodied cider, it has a medium dry taste and light sparkle with a 4.5% ABV.

Ocean Cider is produced for Salcombe Brewery by Sheppy's, one of the oldest cider making families in the world.

John Tiner, owner of Salcombe Brewery, comments, "We are so excited to be launching our very first cider. We have created a range of outstanding ales since we started the business in 2016 and we are thrilled that we are now in a position to add a new dimension to our offering with the launch of Ocean Cider."

salcombebrewery.com



Coffee company releases RTD product

East London-based coffee company Minor Figures has launched its first non-coffee ready-to-drink product. The canned Chai Latte is a nitro-infused dairy-free spiced black tea combined with the brand's signature oat milk.

Minor Figures co-founder Stuart Forsyth comments, "Minor Figures' focus is on quality, innovation and sustainability. As baristas we know that chai can be poor in quality and taste and packed with sugar. Our nitro chai latte is refined sugar free and brewed to our own special recipe, so quality control is in safe hands. The result is an innovative and high quality drink to enjoy on the go."

minorfigures.com

Drinks brand reveals fourth CBD product

BumbleZest has launched a new CBD health shot, the fourth CBD product in its range. The zesty Calm + Comfort has 12mg of CBD, along with lavender, blue spirulina and five other functional ingredients. The immunity boosting health shot is all-natural with no preservatives, additives or GMOs.

Founder Dan Watson says, "This is our newest immunity-boosting health shot; we packed each glass bottle full of eight different functional natural ingredients. It's perfect if you are in need of some zen time. Plus as we say no to plastic, all our packaging is 100% recyclable."

bumblezest.co.uk



WAXED OR GREASEPROOF PAPERS BRANDED WITH YOUR OWN LOGO

Matcha tea collection hits the market

A new range of Matcha Blends teas has joined Clearspring's existing Organic Japanese Matcha offering. The four flavour combinations have been curated to work with the subtle notes of Matcha to give an authentic taste and tea experience. The range includes Matcha Ginger, Matcha Three Mint, Matcha Genmaicha and Matcha Turmeric. The tea comes in compostable bags with organic cotton strings and the packaging is also sustainable.

Clearspring director, Maria Dawson said, "The demand for Matcha has grown immensely over

the past few years. Our matcha blends have been launched to meet this demand, whilst adding something exciting with new flavour combinations.

"This launch is another big milestone for Clearspring in our mission towards sustainable packaging. Sustainability is an increasingly important factor for shoppers, and we want to do everything we can to meet this challenge, whilst continuing to innovate and deliver great tasting products." clearspring.co.uk



Hot Wholegrain Mustard joins Tracklements product range

Tracklements has added Hot Wholegrain Mustard to its range of condiments. Launched to satisfy the demand for products with heat, this mustard uses "nose-tingling" brown mustard seed and mustard flour for a hot combination, ideal for adding depth and flavour to meals.

Tracklements MD, Guy Tullberg, adds, "Hot Wholegrain Mustard has quickly become a go-to staple in my house. It's the right balance of heat and flavour to add oomph to mashed potato, or a creamy mustard sauce for pork chops."

trade.tracklements.co.uk



Tree of Life unveils trio of honeys

Three new Manuka Honey products have been added to the Tree of Life range. Known as the gold standard of honey, Manuka is harvested from New Zealand's Manuka bush, renowned for its powerful health properties. Each batch has been independently tested, certifying its MGO potency, to ensure the highest quality.

Marketing controller Kirsten Sowerby said, "We are thrilled to develop our range to include genuine New Zealand Manuka Honey because of its amazing natural health benefits, plus our Manuka has a great sustainability story too, sourced with care for the environment and a fair deal for landowners. Our mission is to make health easy, offering quality, natural products at affordable prices for you and your customers to enjoy." treeoflife.co.uk



Plant-based cookies arrive from GATO & Co

GATO & Co has released its vegan and gluten-free Cookies N Cream range.

The crunchy plant-based treats have smooth creamy fillings and come in four flavours: Choc Vanilla; Choc Peanut Butter; Choc Hazelnut Butter and Salted Caramel. Each cookie is also free from palm oil and said to contain half the sugar of similar snacks.

Co-founder Kim Lamza said, "At GATO, we are passionate about creating super indulgent plant-based



products that are better for you, your gut and the planet. Our treats are vegan friendly, packed with natural ingredients and contain much less sugar [than similar snacks]." gatoandco.com



Gluten-free bakery unveils own-brand snacks

Award-winning gluten-free bakery, Davina Steel, has launched a brand new range of baked snacks. Following on from the success of its home-baking kits and mixes, the company has responded to the demand for gluten-free on-the-go products. Seven products make up the range, which includes three crostini flavours: Garlic & Rosemary; Onion and Lightly Salted; Lemon & Poppy Seed and Orange & Choc Chip Biscotti, Shortbread Biscuits and Gingerbread Mini Bites.

"Ever since we opened our own purpose-built gluten-free bakery last year it has been our intention to create our own-branded bakery range," explains Davina Steel, co-founder of the brand. "We've noticed a huge gap in the market for good-quality and delicious gluten-free snacks that can be enjoyed on the go. There's little out there to cater for this category so we've filled the gap with a range that should appeal to all tastes and eating occasions."

davinasteel.com



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Award-winning snack company reveals latest healthy offering

Healthy snacking brand **Squirrel Sisters** has unveiled its latest product. The plant-based Peanut Raspberry snack bar is made using just six natural ingredients and contains no added sugar. As with the rest of the range, the bars are also gluten-free and a source of protein. Founders Gracie and Sophie Tyrrell say, "Our mission is to revolutionise the snacking and

confectionery category with our award-winning snacks. For far too long snack bars and confectionery products have been filled with sugars, syrups and artificial sweeteners, but it is possible to have great tasting snacks which do not contain any of these things. We believe you can have great tasting healthy snacks that use only natural ingredients." squirrelsisters.com



White Kimchi arrives from The Cultured Collective

The Cultured Collective has brought to market what it says is a "UK first" – its Fresh & Zesty White Kimchi. White kimchi is a traditional variety of Korean kimchi made without chilli flakes, offering a mild, clean and refreshing flavour. The selection of vegetables are mixed with spices and fermented, packed and left unpasteurised, meaning each jar is filled with good live bacteria that is said to keep digestive systems healthy. Founder and MD Nicola Peters says, "The rich aromatics in this variety pair particularly well with white fish, and add flavour and freshness to stir-fried dishes. Its mild flavour is also a great way to introduce children to fermented products, or for any chilli-phobes that have been dying to get in on the kimchi trend." theculturedcollective.co.uk



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Start-up aims to make its mark in hard seltzer category

Drinks company **DRTY** is looking to capitalise on the growing hard seltzer category in the UK its new 4% ABV hard seltzers. These canned alcoholic beverages contain sparkling water, alcohol and natural fruit flavours and are free from carbohydrates and sugar. The drink is available in two flavours: Raspberry Rosé and White Citrus. Founder Matija Pisk said, "We wanted to give UK consumers an alternative to high-sugar ciders and calorie-dense beers. Ultimately drinking alcohol is not a healthy activity, so the concept for the brand was born out of this contradiction – a drink that is clean but is still pretty DRTY." drtysdrinks.com

Botanical gin takes to the shelves

The Cotswolds Distillery has released a small-batch Wildflower Gin Collection, starting with No.1 Wildflower Gin. The spirit has been inspired by wildflowers growing in what is known as the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands, and features a blend of cornflowers, lavender and orange layered over the distillery's classic London Dry gin. Dan Szor, founder and CEO of Cotswolds Distillery, explains, "We were inspired to create No.1 Wildflower Gin by the long, relaxing drinking occasion and this, coupled with the impressive growth in the spritz market, led us to create an exciting addition to our gin portfolio that can be enjoyed in a refreshing new way." cotswoldsdistillery.com





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CREATIVITY IN A CRISIS

How resilient independent retailers are weathering the Covid-19 storm

“We will continue to be creative”



For Norfolk Deli, staffed by a husband-and-wife duo, despite the drastic decline in footfall in their established shop online sales have skyrocketed.

What's more, being a small business means being able to adapt quickly.

“We are only serving people at the door, which has its challenges as well as its blessings,” Mark Kacary, owner of The Norfolk Deli, said.

“However, what is saving us is the fact that after several years of my wife quipping that I was sitting at the computer fiddling with the website, I have been vindicated. Our online sales have gone up somewhere between 300% and 400%. In total, 95% of all revenues are happening online with daily/weekly sales being pretty much on par with last year's sales.

“We have been using social media a lot to promote our nationwide delivery service for Norfolk products, as well as our home delivery service (which nobody ever used, even though it has been there for the last four years). I spent a day to bolster our home deliveries section, which now means people can buy (currently) 80% of everything we have in the shop online. The remaining 20% is being added daily.

“Eggs aren't a problem for us as I drive to a local free-range egg farm (which I have been doing for the last six years); we collect the eggs directly from the conveyor belt and the farmer keeps all the super large double-yolkers for us, which we then include in our egg boxes. Flour and pasta were an issue, but some of our local suppliers have been going to the local flour mills and suddenly people who used to walk past our shop are suddenly seeing us in a new light.

“What interests me is how many people will carry on using us once this is all over? How many people will forget that we've been able to deliver within 30 minutes of receiving an order whereas supermarkets have been unable to

provide delivery slots for weeks.

“We're busy, we're being creative, we will keep coming up with new ideas, and because we're small, unlike a supermarket, we'll be able to make these changes within hours if not days.”

“Just as we have adapted, customer habits have, too”



“The first two weeks of the Coronavirus crisis were an exhausting and worrying whirlwind of change,” Clare Jackson, co-owner of Slate, said. “Every day brought new risks to be addressed, and new procedures to be developed. Already that feels like a lifetime ago.”

New procedures for Slate have meant adapting the business model to minimise costs, maximise sales, and seek available government support.

“In-store we have sought to offer customers the products they are looking for and enable them to shop safely. We have expanded our product range to include provisions such as milk, eggs and frozen ready-meals; we have also introduced some basic lines of existing products such as pasta.

“Just as we have adapted, customer habits have, too. New routines are being adopted in terms of shopping times and placing orders.

“Away from the shop, online sales have spiked as people heed government advice to stay at home. For a long time, we have wanted to see a lift in the volume of cheese we sell online, however we never wanted it to be under such dreadful circumstances. We are extremely grateful to have our website and dispatch procedures in place to enable us to make online sales and send cheese nationwide by overnight courier.”

Like many companies across the country, whilst making immediate changes that reflect the current situation, Clare is also thinking long-term.

“Every day brought new risks to be addressed, and new procedures to be developed. Already that feels like a lifetime ago”

CLARE JACKSON, SLATE

“Government support is vital to the future of our business. The timing of this crisis is particularly difficult for us given the seasonal nature of our sales pattern. We were just coming off three quiet months in terms of footfall and whilst our sales were running well against target, we were looking forward to Easter and the school holiday visitors to boost our cash coffers. We have applied for a government small business grant and entered staff into the furlough scheme. We wait to see what cash will be forthcoming and when – hopefully it will be soon as we cannot wait long for the repayment of staff payroll. Timely government support is critical to the emergency business model we have adopted.

“Whilst we feel positive and energetic in the short-term, the severity of this crisis must never be forgotten in terms of the health of loved ones and the health of small businesses such as Slate on the British high street.”

“Have courage, but don't take risks”



Scotland's oldest delicatessen and Italian wine merchant, Valvona & Crolla, has taken the approach of being proactive, rather than reactive.

After closing its retail shops, cafes, restaurants and carry-out services, the company has unsurprisingly seen an uplift in online orders, with an increase in everyday and store cupboard ingredients – and it's 00 flour that's proving to be most popular.

“We have a long established

delivery service, which has helped us keep on top of the change in pace,” said V&C's Mary Contini. “Although deliveries have been interrupted, we had anticipated an increase in trade and had already bought extra stock. Our top-selling foods are still our V&C branded and specially selected products that we have stocked for generations, including pasta, fresh fruit and veg, Valvona & Crolla roasted coffee and San Marzano tinned tomatoes.

“We have also seen more customers sending food parcels to family and friends as a way of staying in touch, and we're offering ‘stay at home’ parcels with ready-cooked meals from our chefs.”

When it comes to restocking, V&C is in constant contact with its suppliers, and chooses to wait for products to re-enter the market rather than opting for inferior ingredients in their place.

And of course, the business couldn't continue without its staff, customers and suppliers. Staff have been retrained in health and safety, and new measures have been implemented: hand-washing takes place every 15 minutes; staff work and eat in separate sections; work areas are cleaned constantly; and extra uniforms and gloves have been provided.

“Every business is facing the same challenges at the moment, and our priority is to ensure a safe working environment for our team, and to continue delivering the best food and drinks to our customers,” Mary said.

“We are calling our elderly clients and responding to any requests as best we can. People want familiarity under stressful situations, and we try to support them. We are sending food to local food banks, and we have offered our staff food at cost price so they don't have to worry about shortages elsewhere.

“Every day we get support from our customers and friends. Our suppliers have been unilaterally supportive and have gone out of their way to ease the strain on the business.

“To other businesses: have courage, but don't take risks – and keep safe.”

“We'll have a community event when this is all over!”



Teesdale Cheesemakers has established a drive-thru that's going from strength to strength, and it looks like it could have long-lasting effects, too: “People are really supporting us and are returning, which is always a good sign,” says co-owner Allison Raper. “We've expanded the range now to include other dairy products, fruit and veg, wine and beer, as well as treats like puddings, cakes and crisps. This could change the shape of our café shop in the future.”

Whilst like many retailers in a similar situation as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, supply is sometimes an issue – Allison notes flour and pasta as tricky ingredients to keep in stock – the brand is still managing to satisfy same-day delivery whenever possible: “We're able to get supplies of most ingredients,” she says, “and having worked on the markets for four years, we know a lot of good producers. We even delivered a gift box of cheese as a present, which was lovely!”

But most of all, Allison reflects on the sense of community spirit which has become tangible amidst all the uncertainty, and this is no doubt a driving force for Teesdale Cheesemakers to continue its efforts in supporting producers and customers alike.

“The community has been incredibly supportive of us, and really wants the business to survive, which is very touching. More importantly, early on we made a call out and now have about a dozen volunteers ready to help anyone who needs anything: prescriptions collecting, dogs walking or even just a call to beat off the boredom. We're getting to know our locals, and it feels like everyone is pulling together. I think we'll have a community event when this is all over!”

“We're busy, we're being creative, we will keep coming up with new ideas”

MARK KACARY, NORFOLK DELI

“People want familiarity under stressful situations, and we try to support them”

MARY CONTINI, VALVONA & CROLLA

All physical retail at the moment is facing a challenge of footfall. One thing I observe dealing with local food and drink merchants recently is that people seem to be gravitating towards supermarkets and small suppliers. Most seem pretty well stocked. They're offering things people wouldn't think of first of all, but they're very significant providers of food and some are picking up footfall. If people aren't out and about that's a challenge, but they're reaching out to customers (because they need customers) via all the things you'd hope they'd use like social media and websites. So although many don't have full blown e-commerce sites from the evidence we can see, they're using the more straightforward, more lightweight methods of posting things on Facebook or Twitter. That's something that frankly I've been advocating to outlets of all kinds for some time. There's evidence that the engagement of high street businesses of all types with social media is not as strong as it could be. Very often retailers are put off by concerns about going full-on with heavy duty e-commerce. My argument is that actually they don't need to. Making a step is the most important thing. Right now that's proving important. Locally, at Taste Harborough, they're offering to take card details over the phone and deliver. For those that are self-isolating or unable to deliver this is proving to be extremely useful.

There will be impacts for years to come, but for food and drink retailers those impacts will be different to those affecting others. Results for the big grocers pretty much match what's coming through anecdotally from small businesses: many are busy. One local high-end wine merchant I spoke to last week described trade in-shop as "like Christmas Eve". A local farmer and retailer reported that not only were sales strong, but that they were reaching customers they had never reached before, both locally and further afield. People may decide not to buy clothes right now, but they will continue to eat and drink.

When you get massive dislocations in daily life, that's when things change. There are two parts to this: the behaviour of businesses (because they need the turnover) but also the behaviour of customers. It's been noticeable when you look at online sales that although one in five pounds is spent online in this country, actually the break down of that is that less than 10% is food, whereas food makes up around 50% of total retail. So while there's been higher penetration into other markets, food has remained stubbornly behind. What's fascinating to see is whether consumers taking that first step to online shopping, as many have been doing now, will cause lasting change. My guess is we'll see a sea change in the use of non-physical selling.

It's important to remember we will get through this. It will pass, at some point, even if we don't know when that will be. It'll be fascinating to see if this experience fundamentally changes the ways we work, if it changes our relationships with the customers who buy from us. My feeling is that yes, some things will stick. We'll have to look at that in a year or two's time. Right now my guess would be some will return to earlier ways but the big change will have taken place.

Yes, the current situation will come to an end... the questions are 'when' and 'how'. We still don't know about the when and that poses one of the bigger challenges to the entire economy: the longer we all remain in lockdown the more businesses will meet their ends and the more jobs will be lost. That aggregate loss of demand, warned of in the OBR's prediction of a hit in the immediate term amounting to a third of the entire economy, will affect all producers and all retailers because it will affect very large numbers of consumers.



VIEWPOINT: MICHAEL WEEDON

Coronavirus brings unprecedented challenges, but may have some silver linings for indie retail says the Federation of Small Businesses's chair of retail and high street policy

At the same time economists are predicting (in varying degrees) some rebound in demand as society creaks back into life, and those producers and retailers can expect to see some benefit from that. The other question is about how it ends and it's clear that if furloughing, for example, comes to an overall end, all businesses will immediately have to resume the pay burden – at a time when income may be just starting to recover.

We listened to the Chancellor's 'whatever it takes' statement with interest. Could or should the Treasury do more to help mitigate this situation for independent retailers? The actions taken by Government so far actually

prioritised independent retailers – it's only retail and leisure businesses that are in line for the flat rate £25,000 business rates grants – and FSB sources tell us that some have already received these. However, as the Chancellor has said, not all businesses are protected and not all will be. Business representative organisations are working hard to demonstrate to Government where the many gaps are and where they think the promise of "whatever it takes" will need to be fulfilled.

The big disappointment, to which the Government has begun to react, is the very low rate of loan approvals under the Corona

“It'll be fascinating to see if this experience fundamentally changes the ways we work, if it changes our relationships with the customers who buy from us”

GOVERNMENT RESCUE PLAN: A TIMELINE

March 11th

The Budget includes statutory sick pay for all self isolating, with support for self-employed, sick pay refunds for small firms, business interruption loans of up to £1.2m, and the abolition of business rates for retail outlets with a rateable value below £51,000.

March 17th

Chancellor Rishi Sunak promises the Government will do "whatever it takes to support jobs, incomes and businesses," announcing cash grants to individual businesses, three-month mortgage holidays, and extending business rates holiday to all businesses.

20th March

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme announced, VAT payments deferred for three months and interest on business interruption schemes dropped for 12 months.

26th March

The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme is announced, and welcomed as "huge packet for support" by FSB chair Mike Cherry.

1st April

Maximum contactless payments increased from £30 to £45.

3rd April

The CBILs extended to all businesses solvent and trading before the crisis. With personal guarantees scrapped for loans up to £250,000.

Business Interruption Loan scheme (CBILs). Businesses need cash now. Later may be too late. For example, there are 5.9 million businesses in the UK, 4.8 million of which are self-employed single persons – they look to be particularly challenged by this. We need to make that when this passes, they are still there, continuing to provide employment and products. The Chancellor has done some good things, particularly for retail, but there's more to do to keep cash moving.

Another problem is that furloughing staff has a countdown built into it: initially for a three-month period, furloughing is designed to protect against redundancies. Employment law tells us that businesses that may need to consider redundancies if furloughing is not renewed have a lead time for consultations on potential terminations. For small businesses the period is undefined, for those with more than 20 employees involved there is a consultation period "lead time" of 30 days and for businesses considering over 100 positions that lead time extends to 45 days. Right now bigger businesses are right on the edge of that time limit, so further clarification from the Chancellor is needed, quickly.

Can the high street survive? When you look at convenience stores – numbers of which are approaching 40,000 – they have their own supply chains and money and credit is flowing. I've heard people say these small local offers are very helpful. Personally, I'd run out of lapsang souchong tea bags, there were none in the supermarkets, but I found them at Emerson & West, my local fine food retailer. These businesses are getting creative and taking steps which in many cases they hadn't before. Bizarrely, that's one of the good things coming out of a very bad situation.

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Tracklements

Pioneers of the pantry since 1970

The Covid-19 pandemic has made consumers keen to boost immunity. High quality honey has antibacterial, prebiotic and antioxidant properties and beekeepers and suppliers report higher than usual demand.

ANY OTHER REASONS HONEY IS TRENDING?

Heaps. Beekeeping has been popular for a decade now because of concerns about declining bee numbers. So many London businesses – including the St Ermin's Hotel, Fortnum & Mason and the Cordon Bleu cookery school – have rooftop hives that the capital has the highest density of honey bees in Europe.

The 2018 tax on sugar in fizzy drinks made shoppers review their white sugar consumption. Some switched to honey – perceived as healthier even though it's 80% sugar.

Then there's the arrival of well-made honeys from Eastern Europe and further afield. It showed foodies there's much more to it than the heat-treated, blended syrup in squeezable plastic bottles.

Over 450 honeys from 30 countries were entered into the 2020 Great Taste Awards. Trend Watch had the pleasure last year of judging a three star winner – Sidr Honey with Black Onion Seeds (Lote and Co). It transported us in one spellbinding mouthful to the souks of the Middle East.

GIVE ME A QUICK HONEY LESSON

If manufacturers remove the pollen – honey's DNA – you can't prove whether a product comes from Sherborne or Shanghai. Premium honeys sell for up to £60/200g so honey is the third most adulterated food after olive oil and wine. When buying, look for duration on the palate rather than honey aroma and viscosity. Crystallization is normal. Avoid blends and don't forget quieter honeys sell as well as punchier varieties.

WHO BUYS HONEY?

Four types of customer will pay a premium. They are: traditionalists, wellness fiends, adventurous



THE JOY OF HONEY

It's boom time for Mother Nature's original luxury food reports Sally-Jayne Wright

gourmets and those interested in all things natural.

TELL ME ABOUT THE TRADITIONALISTS.

They favour British honeys and honeycombs from independent apiaries, with flavour profiles that remind them of childhood. Think Fortnum & Mason's Scottish Ling Heather or Shropshire Creamed. The multifloral Cornish honey produced by local vet, Stephen Putnam, and sold at The Allotment Deli, St Ives is another example. Like countless beekeepers, Putnam makes only enough to supply a handful of shops.

HOW ABOUT THE SECOND GROUP, WELLNESS FIENDS?

Honey is a cough suppressant and eases sore throats. Hayfever

sufferers seek out local pots in the belief they relieve symptoms. Then there's Manuka, made from Manuka flower nectar and selling for up to £300 a kilo. It's reputed to aid tissue regeneration so popular in skincare. It helps heal wounds, cuts, burns and infections, enhances antibiotic efficiency and boosts immunity.

WHAT MAKES IT SO SPECIAL?

All unpasteurised honeys contain hydrogen peroxide, a natural

antiseptic destroyed by heat. The peroxide in Manuka is much more robust and powerful and that's down to the presence of methylglyoxal (MGO), up to 100 times as much as ordinary honey.

I CAN'T GET MY HEAD AROUND ALL THE NUMBERS AND GRADING SYSTEMS!

If unsure, check with the Unique Manuka Factor Association of New Zealand (umf.org.nz) and ask for a lab testing certificate.

IS IT ALL A CON?

Fourth generation beekeeper, James Hamill of the Hive Honey Shop online retailer – formerly the UK's first and only bricks-and-mortar shop dedicated to honey – says, "We stopped selling Manuka in 2018 after

worrying reports (of adulteration, fake Manuka and watered down versions). We do not sell or trust it to this day."

Many British beekeepers are sceptical whether Manuka represents value for money. They point out that unlike New Zealand Manuka, our honeys haven't received government marketing support.

HOW ABOUT THE THIRD GROUP, 'ADVENTUROUS GOURMETS'?

They're interested in palate-pleasing experiences. So introduce them to: Greek Anise & Fennel Honey (Beewell), Lithuanian Buckwheat Honey (baltichoneyshop.co), Linden Honeys from Serbia (Milanovic-Knowles Ltd), Coriander Honeys from Bulgaria (Mellifera) and Raw Lime Blossom Honey from Hungary (bestofhungary.co.uk). Surprise them with how 'rural' London honeys – such as Bermondsey Street Bees' award-winners – can taste.

AND LASTLY, WHO ARE THOSE BUYERS DRAWN TO ALL THINGS NATURAL?

Oxfordshire beekeeper, Julie Macken of Neves Bees sells her honey and beeswax skincare at country fairs: "We've found people who like natural foods like natural products in general." So display beeswax wraps, honey soaps and lip balms alongside the edibles.

HOW CAN WE MAKE THE MOST OF THE TREND?

Give customers the feel-good factor and stock honeys where a few pence per sale go to support dwindling bee populations. Promote honeycombs as the ideal accompaniment to cheeseboards. Thyme and orange blossom go with Ricotta, goat and feta, while chestnut and buckwheat honeys complement nutty heddar and Comte. Milder honeys point up the fieriness of blues.

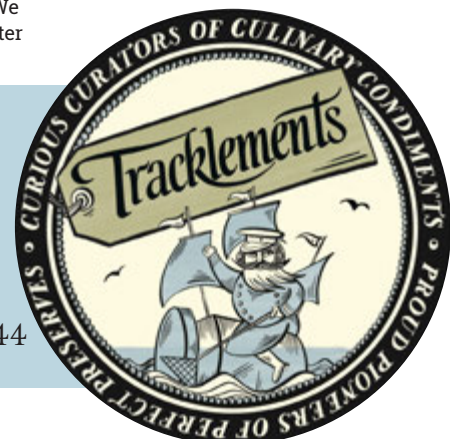
WILL THE TREND LAST?

If we were to design the ideal product for fine food retailers, honey would be it. It has long shelf life, tastes amazing with cheese therefore creating opportunities to cross-sell, has an astonishing range of flavour profiles and appeals to a wide range of buyers. Most important, artisan beekeepers will never produce enough to supply the supermarkets so for once the multiples can't copy and undercut you. Sweet.



Tracklements - delighting food lovers for 50 years

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HOW TO GET HOME DELIVERY UP & RUNNING ASAP

Whether you already offer a limited service and want to expand, or are completely new to the world of ordering and delivery, our expert tips will help you make those first steps and decide what's right for your business

WORDS: NATASHA LOVELL-SMITH, EDITOR OF GREAT BRITISH FOOD MAGAZINE



DARTS FARM BROTHERS

In a very short space of time, the coronavirus crisis has completely changed how shops of all shapes and sizes operate. While indie food sellers are classed as essential businesses, retailers are understandably keen to protect their staff and customers by keeping physical interaction in-store to a minimum. And with many unable to leave their homes at all, a lot of small retailers are having to quickly revamp their existing business models to include some form of delivery service.

Standing out from the competition

From the start of the coronavirus crisis, the first instinct of shoppers has been to head straight to supermarket websites. As a result – and as the situation has progressed in severity – all of the major multiples have been overwhelmed

“If you're just starting to offer delivery, keep it simple and offer free delivery for a small local area. Keep your order process and forms small and simple: consumers need basics”

VHARI RUSSELL, FOOD MARKETING EXPERTS

with online orders. Delivery and click and collect spots are nearly impossible to secure on any of the supermarket websites (Ocado currently only has 400 available nationwide), customers have to queue to get on the Morrisons and Ocado websites, while Riverford and Abel & Cole are't taking orders from new customers.

The likelihood is the multiples will eventually begin to readjust to the increased demand, but in the meantime, independents have a unique opportunity to make themselves indispensable to local shoppers – and attract loyal

new customers who previously may not have been familiar with their services. Whether that's by offering free local delivery, sending out creative hampers with innovative themes, getting involved in community activities or simply being at the other end of the phone to take orders and payments, there are plenty of ways savvy retailers can make the best of a tricky situation.

Paul Hargreaves, chief executive of Cotswold Fayre, thinks indies should make the most of the chance to offer reassurance and comfort to consumers. “Shopping

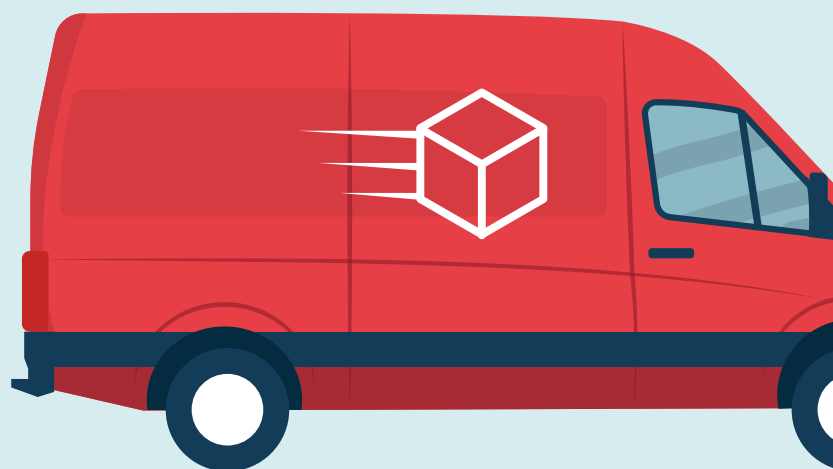
in supermarkets over the past two weeks has become a frightening experience for many older people, and local shops have provided a service that enables people to stay safe in their homes. In addition, independent retailers have managed to keep stock on their shelves better than most of the supermarkets,” says Paul.

Darts Farm in Exeter are supporting their customers by offering free home delivery to over 70 year olds or collection in their car park. “Once we have cracked the essential food items for our local community we will be looking at how we can begin to cheer people up in this hard time. Our ‘Send Some Cheer’ post box hampers are a box of artisan treats that can be popped in the post and delivered to anyone that may need some cheer,” says owner Michael Dart.

“If you're just starting to offer delivery, keep it simple and offer free delivery for a small local area,” advised Vhari Russell at Food Marketing Experts. “Keep your order process and forms small and simple: consumers need basics. It's not Christmas so offering a basic list of products that you feel assured you can get is key,” she added.

In Malton, North Yorkshire, design agency Ten Fathoms have set up an online directory called Malton Delivers, listing details of all businesses in the area that are offering delivery services and alternative shopping arrangements. The website is simple but effective, listing contact details and opening hours of each retailer, as well as what they can currently offer.

Donna Middleditch at Ten Fathoms said: “We saw first-hand that there has been a disconnect between the larger supermarkets – which have fast been running out of stock – and the smaller local businesses, who have plenty of stock but have perhaps seen less footfall in recent weeks. We wanted to help the local community by setting up a hub



for them to use as a directory when ordering food. We hope that by using our skills in design we can do our bit to help."

Dominic Allport, insights director at market research company The NPD Group, believes that during uncertain times, shoppers want to use trusted, familiar businesses. He said, "We know from anecdotal evidence in China in January that consumers continued to support foodservice outlets that they knew well, and that there was still strong demand for food and beverages that can be consumed off the premises. Any local outlet offering delivery, drive through or click and collect will be able to mitigate some of the effects of the inevitable business downturn prompted by the coronavirus outbreak."

Your options: an overview

Liam Patton is a director at digital marketing agency Mayfly. He works with a range of small businesses, helping them to raise awareness and drive traffic to support online sales.

He said, "The quickest and most popular routes for food and drink retailers to sell takeaway meals online would be to add their business to the likes of Deliveroo & Just Eat. However, this means paying upfront fees to join, and then 15-30% commissions on sales. A caveat here is that businesses in rural locations also might not be covered by these services," he explained.

"A more affordable route can be to utilise and develop an existing website. Food and drink retailers can add an e-commerce store to their existing website. Although it can take time to build an ecommerce shop and have the merchant account (Paypal or Stripe) created, this is a streamlined way to take orders 24/7 and sets retailers up for the short and long-term."

And if you don't have the time or finances to invest in an



ANTHONY DAVISON, BIG BARN

e-commerce shop? "If a business is short on time and budget, the quickest solution would be to add a chat service to the site that the owners can operate from their phone, and then take orders via the chat window. Payment could then be taken over the phone or by PayPal. It's a low cost and quick method of adapting in these unpredictable times."

He adds: "In either case, it's important for these businesses to update their social media channels and their 'Google my Business' listing to let their audience know that they are taking orders online, and offering home deliveries."

Using a third party

If you're keen to get cracking as soon as possible, another option for getting an ordering system up and running quickly is to use a third party website such as Big Barn, a local food hub with 8,700 producers and retailers on its Local Food Map, plus 20,000 registered consumers. Businesses can create their own profile and have the option of selling



MALTON



MICHAEL DART, DARTS FARM

online via the website's marketplace, advertised as 'the Amazon of local food'. "We can set up the shop, local delivery restrictions, promotion and also offer advice to get the service viable quickly," said founder Anthony Davison, a fifth generation farmer who set up Big Barn almost 20 years ago.

Since the coronavirus outbreak,

Anthony has seen web traffic increase from 2,000 visitors per day to 10,000 due to extra demand for local food. "In response, we've just set up hub technology so that producers can team up with other local sellers to offer one shopping basket and one delivery." He recommends keeping things small and manageable at first, expanding only when you have

capacity. "We have also added a 'local delivery only' facility so that those on the map with online shops can limit orders to customers in a set local delivery area. This will help local shops quickly and easily offer a small range of essentials and deliver to those self isolating locally," he adds.

The fee is reasonable and cheaper in the short term than investing in your own e-commerce system. "We like to charge £10 +VAT per month for large businesses, dropping to £40 +VAT a year for small or seasonal businesses. We also charge a 6% commission for those who have shops on Big Barn, but give 2% back to any affiliate websites promoting our map and marketplace," he adds.

These are stressful times for any small food business, but there are plenty of options currently available to keep retailers afloat, whatever your budget or timeframe. Companies are reporting huge amounts of goodwill and support in the local community – something that will hopefully continue long after the crisis is over.





A well-stocked selection of storecupboard essentials can make all the difference

1 WOMERSLEY FOODS VINEGAR

Versatile, multi Great Taste Award-winning vinegars created by the Parsons family to delight your taste buds. These vinegars are made from all natural products and are bursting with real fruit, from raspberries to lemon and blackcurrant. What's more, these vinegars blends beautifully with any good oil. womersleyfoods.com

2 HAWKSHEAD RELISH PRESERVES AND CONDIMENTS

Family-run Hawkshead Relish are producers of award-winning preserves and a delicious range of sauces and ketchups, including the bestselling Black Garlic Ketchup which was launched in 2017. All products are made with natural ingredients and are gluten-free and nut-free, as well as suitable for vegetarians. hawksheadrelish.com

3 THE SEASONIST RICE AND COUSCOUS KITS

Just add water, cook simply and add the topping of choice for a risotto or couscous experience straight from the store cupboard. Inspired by eating around the Mediterranean, Dorset-based The Seasonists have been making their tasty kits since 2005, choosing authentic ingredients and perfecting their recipes along the way. theseasonist.co

2

3



6

7



4 TREE OF LIFE MANUKA HONEY

Tree of Life has added three new Manuka Honeys to its range of quality, affordable health foods. Known as the gold standard of honey, Manuka is harvested from New Zealand's Manuka bush, renowned for its powerful health properties. Each batch is independently tested, certifying its MGO potency, so you can be assured of the highest quality.

treeoflife.co.uk

5 PASTA GAROFALO PASTA & SAUCES

Pasta Garofalo has extended its range to include Pesto made with extra virgin Italian olive oil, pine nuts and Parmigiano Reggiano and pasta sauces made with 100% Italian tomatoes. The sauces and pesto are ideal pairings for Garofalo pasta shapes and a perfect solution for making excellent dishes with minimal effort.

pasta-garofalo.com

6 BANHOEK CHILLI OIL

Banhoek Chilli Oil is handcrafted in the beautiful Banhoek Valley near Stellenbosch, South Africa. Using only the highest quality rapeseed oil and dried Thai birdseye chillies, it offers the perfect combination of heat versus flavour. Cook with or use as a drizzle.

banhoekchillioil.co.uk

7 MAKE MINE A BUILDERS TEA

What we need in these stressful times is something we can depend on. Nothing fancy. Nothing frilly. Nothing pompous. All we need is what comforts us every day, every time – a strong, calming cuppa. What we need is Make Mine a Builders. 40's, 80's and decaf.

makemineabuilders.com

ARE YOU READY FOR A SUCCESSFUL ONLINE BUSINESS?

Mathew March-Smith, co-founder of online cheese destination Pong, shares his hard-earned expertise



DON'T FORGET

- The increased number of online purchases won't change the marketplace entirely, it will simply re-aligned buyers' relationships with the brands and products with which they already have a positive relationship
- From the beginning of the customer journey, for example sitting on the sofa, at a laptop and entering 'order cheese delivery' into Google, all the way through to the text beside the 'Checkout Now' button at the end of the order process, every stage is an opportunity to convert or not convert a sale
- Little improvements make huge differences. That's why some shops do far better than others on the internet
- Once you've got a sale or two you need to ensure your logistical operation is well thought through, from the management of stock, especially if it is perishable like ours, the speed and efficiency of the order processing and packaging routines, and of course having a well-priced, reliable, effective courier(s)

order value to £25. You'd then make a sales turnover of £6,000. Little improvements make huge differences. That's why some shops do far better than others on the internet.

Post-sale to dos

But it's not all about sales is it? Once you've got a sale or two you need to ensure your logistical operation is well thought through from the management of stock, especially if it is perishable like ours, the speed and efficiency of the order processing and packaging routines and of course having a well-priced, reliable, effective courier(s).

We've always said, Pong is a cheese delivery company i.e. half of our offering is the quality and variety of the product, and the other half is getting it quickly and safely to our customers. This therefore puts a lot of emphasis on the quality of the couriers, so it's a good idea to keep trying different companies until you're happy with one key one that serves the majority of your needs (naturally you'll have others for different requirements, for example international shipments).

Final word...

Finally, be careful what you wish for! From the sales example above it's easy to see how things could get quickly out of hand if you're not set up to deal with higher volumes. Selling on the internet is not just about going for the highest possible number; the real art to creating and growing a successful online business is managing the volumes of sales and their fulfilment at the same time. This is particularly pronounced when you're selling perishable products with a finite shelf life, such as cheese, and stock management becomes critical to the success of the business.

This strange and difficult period of retail has, at least temporarily, changed the way people buy food. The fact we're stuck inside for days on end has meant that the easiest way to get something we love, cheese in the case of our business, is by searching on the internet and ordering a delivery. It has also forced the hand of gift-givers who would previously take something to friends or relatives and now must organise something exciting to be taken to them; in this instance, an artisanal, quality food item fits the bill perfectly.

The surge in online demand could last for as long as the lockdown itself, but it will likely also influence what was already a perpetual increase in internet shopping volume over a much longer time. The increased number of online purchases won't of course change the marketplace entirely, it will simply re-align buyers' relationships with the brands and products with which they already have a positive relationship. For many grocery buyers, this period might even represent the first time they have ever ordered on the internet and as long as they have a positive experience they will likely be back for more, trying new companies and new products as their online skills and confidence improves.

Remember: it's at this initial point of their journey that the relationship with our company and its products begins, and it's at every stage of that ensuing process that what we create



and update and manage, namely our website, has to work really hard at converting every opportunity.

Consider 'conversion'

If you're a retailer and you want a successful online shop, you must approach its build and marketing with a thorough understanding and strategy of it as a series of 'conversion' points. From the beginning of the customer journey, for example sitting on the sofa, at a laptop and entering 'order cheese delivery' into Google, all the way

through to the text beside the 'Checkout Now' button at the end of the order process, every stage is an opportunity to convert or not convert a sale. The ranking in the search results and consequent traffic into relevant pages, your 'bounce rate' from your landing page (how many customers simply take a look and leave), your prices and average order value, your basket abandonment rate and ultimately your eventual conversion rate; all of these together will have a huge impact on how successful your online shop is.

Here's an example, let's say you have 1,000 'natural' visitors to your online shop in the month (natural meaning how many would come from a search without any optimisation or paid marketing). If the product you sell the most of is on the second page of the user journey and only 10% of visitors end up going to that page and 20% of them add it to their basket and 50% of them actually complete the order, you'll make 10 sales. Now, let's say you do a bit of work optimising the site and now you have 1,200 visitors to your shop (because you were higher up the search rankings) and the product you sell is on the landing page and 30% of visitors add it to their basket (because the photography is better and the price is more accurate) and 60% actually complete the order (because you've installed a great, easy to use 'one page checkout'). Now, you'll make 240 sales! Quite a staggering difference, no? Imagine now your average order value is £20: in the first case you'd make £200 in sales whereas in the second case you'd make £4,800. Finally, imagine then you did some work improving cross and up sell at the checkout and you managed to improve the average

“ Selling on the internet is not just about going for the highest possible number; the real art to creating and growing a successful online business is managing the volumes of sales and their fulfilment at the same time ”

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PETER'S YARD



MASTER CHEESE PAIRING

Partnering great cheeses with their perfect accompaniments will help your cheese counter stand out from the crowd

You've perfected your cheese selection, you've mastered the art of affinage and your cheese care knowledge is second to none. Time to level up your cheese offering with an expertly curated range of accompaniments. "The obvious options are crackers and chutneys as they are the two main

things that a customer will instantly pair with a cheeseboard," starts Jen Grimstone-Jones, co-owner of Cheese Etc, The Pangbourne Cheese Shop.

There's a huge range of biscuits for cheese available, from thin and crispy to thick and flavoured and everything in between. When it

comes to perfect partners, allow your customers to vote with their palates – and pounds – so you are assured of a range which will sell. "We have tried a few different companies when it comes to crackers but have found that the Fine Cheese Company range and Peter's Yard range are by far the best popular so now we mostly stick to them."

Jen has found that choosing a selection of flavourful preserves to accompany her range of cheeses and crackers to be more demanding. "Chutneys are such a personal choice, so we sell a range from Kitchen Garden that work really nicely alongside our cheeses as well as different spicy options from Single Variety." While the fine food industry offers a plethora of delicious options, Jen has found that, "it's better to have a smaller range of really good quality items than loads of different options as the customers just get confused."

“It's time to level up your cheese offering with an expertly curated range of accompaniments”

HOW TO UPSELL

Justin Tunstall, cheese consultant and former Town Mill Cheesemonger, shares his tips

What do you call a shopper who has bought five fine cheeses from you, spending £50? A great customer? Sure, but they might also be a missed opportunity.

Selling cut cheese is time consuming. Sample, cut and wrap is an involved procedure.

A cheesemonger's skill lies in doing that swiftly, yet without making the customer feel rushed. We improve at the process through practice and learning more about the cheeses we are selling. The same goes for the cross-selling of 'accompaniments'. I believe that there's a simple way of maximizing these sales and adding to every day's takings:

1 Think about your cheese range. What would make a great match for every cheese that you sell? Have a perfect chutney or preserve in mind for each sale. The same goes for biscuits. Taste them all – they're not just boxes and jars on the shelf.

2 Educate both staff and customers: there's no such thing as 'one fits all' biscuit, or preserve.

3 At the counter, try asking your customers this sort of question: "Have you ever tried Spiced Plum preserve with that?" It makes them feel consulted rather than sold to. You are sharing your experience, rather than pushing something onto them.

4 Have your accompaniments to hand, so that they don't have to hunt them down.

5 If you have a separate checkout area, get the till operators to look for the cross sell, too. Again, make sure that their recommendations are within easy reach.

With care and application, you can improve your chances of turning that £50 into a sale of £60 or more.

In the event that customers find it hard to make a decision, it's important that your staff are up to the challenge of offering suggestions; Jen's team samples each product so they have knowledge of the shop's range – "after all, if they like something they find it easier to sell," she explains. She often gets feedback from customers, too, "so they feel as though they have an input to the products that we sell," and has found that tastings help to boost connection between product/supplier and customers – boosting sales in the process. "For us it's really all about finding products that people like so they don't just buy something as a one off," she concludes. "Repeat custom is king!"

Clear signage is key: "We site the chutneys and crackers together on shelves so customers can easily identify which ones work well together. The wines, ciders and beers that we sell all have labels which highlight which cheeses, crackers and chutneys they pair with. We definitely find that customers like to be guided in their choices!"

"As well as the obvious accompaniments we try to have things in that are a bit more unusual,"

says Jen. "Our newest edition on that front is a jelly made from Medlars which comes from Eastgate Larder in Norfolk. It has been a real hit with our customers and pairs well with soft cheeses. Also, for soft cheese we sell a grape nectar which can be drizzled over the cheese and adds a lovely twist, as does truffle honey. For a more traditional ploughman's we have pickled onions and then we also sell pickled gherkins which go really well (amazingly) with goats' cheese! Our baked fig balls are a good substitute for real figs on a cheeseboard, and we do a range of salamis which pair well with cheese."




PETER'S YARD

The natural
choice for
cheese

New retail perspectives from industry experts

Expansion on the horizon for Bradburys Cheese

Bradburys Cheese plans to launch new product ranges and expand into new markets with the help of £8.5m asset-based lending facility provided by Secure Trust Bank Commercial Finance. The facility will be used to fund the company's work, with plans in the pipeline to invest in the development of new snacking products.

Bradburys Cheese was originally founded in 1884 and was taken over by the Paul family in 1994. The business now turns over revenues in excess of £70m and is the sole supplier of cheese to the Falkland Islands.

Michelle Jackson Hanstock, managing director of Bradburys Cheese, commented, "We have big ambitions at Bradburys Cheese and are proud of what we have already achieved as a family-owned business. Our seven-year association with our global airline partner is an important part of

our business and we want to continue to evolve in order to attract big clients. Having customers from all over the world, we want to expand on this momentum and push ourselves to create more award-winning products."

"We have found that Secure Trust Bank were the ideal partners in order to grow our business. Its flexibility has given us the opportunity to look at expansion and enabled the business to position itself as a key player in different markets."



Lancashire-based producer supports local businesses

Fourth generation family business Butlers Farmhouse Cheeses has brought together small artisan food and drink producers in the North of England to create the 'Butlers Larder'. The service will support local suppliers and provide a central online platform for produce, from essentials such as eggs and bread to coffee and gin. The service delivers to customers in West Yorkshire, Merseyside, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Cumbria and Lancashire.

Matthew Hall, owner of Butlers, says, "It's a difficult time for many small businesses and we have found a way for them to continue doing what they do best, knowing that they can get their products to people in their own homes. Customers can safely get the products that they need from a central place and enjoy the best and most exciting artisans, all while supporting local small businesses when they really need it."



Biotiful Dairy targets lunchtime eating with healthy Kefir Cheese

Biotiful Dairy aims to shake up the soft cheese category with the launch of three all-natural savoury Kefir Cheese flavours. Said to be the first of its kind to launch in the UK, the flavours are Original, Herb & Garlic and Red Pepper & Cumin.

Positioned as a healthier alternative for cottage or cream cheese, biotiful's Kefir Cheese is made with British milk and Kefir cultures which contain billions of gut-friendly bacteria. The product is high in both protein and calcium while low in calories and fat.

Founder Natasha Bowes says, "As a highly commoditised category, soft cheese is in need of disruptive, healthy innovation. Biotiful Kefir Cheese brings the health benefits of Kefir and versatility of fresh cheese, along with a range of great savoury flavours, to the soft cheese category. Biotiful Kefir Cheese is naturally high in protein, low in fat and has the unique Biotiful gut-friendly cultures. It is the innovation that delivers strongly on shoppers needs right now as they focus on health, naturalness and immunity."

Cheesemaker extends online offerings

The Wensleydale Creamery has adapted its online mail order offerings to give customers a wider selection of produce available to be delivered to their door.

The company has launched an Online Deli section to its website with offerings from local producers usually available at the Visitor Centre. This includes a selection of crackers, chutneys, biscuits and chocolate, as well as a range of Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese. A range of gifts and homeware is also available to purchase online for the first time.

Visitor Centre director, Trish Cannon, said, "Whilst supermarkets are facing increasing demand and pressure, we don't want to see people go without the everyday essentials – we hope our online deli will ensure everyone is able to easily access our award-winning cheeses, as well as supporting other local Yorkshire businesses whose delicious food products and locally-made gifts are available through our mail order."

CHEESE FACT FILE...

TOMME DE SAVOIRE

- **Country of origin:** France ● **Milk:** Cow's ● **Type:** Semi-soft
- **Background:** Tomme de Savoie is part of the Tomme family of cheeses made in the Savoie region of France. Made using skimmed milk, it's low in fat at around 20-40%. The maturing process takes around two to four months where it will develop a thick rind and numerous holes or 'eyes' throughout.
- **Tasting Notes:** The taste of the cheese varies depending on the time of year and what the cow's are eating, but generally has a mild, nutty, earthy flavour.



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Made using Halen Môn hand harvested pure Sea Salt.

Industry initiative launched to connect consumers with cheesemakers

The Specialist Cheesemakers Association (SCA), Academy of Cheese and the Guild of Fine Food has teamed up for an initiative to connect consumers with local cheesemakers and independent retailers by providing online directories of companies that are open for business or ready to deliver.

The lockdown of the hospitality sector has led to many small producers stuck with maturing rooms full of cheese or forced to give produce away for free. The aim is to create awareness of the threats to the industry caused by

the Coronavirus outbreak.

The first-of-its-kind collaborative project will culminate in the British Cheese Weekender, set to take place 8th-10th May, when the public will be encouraged to enjoy the country's best cheeses with a series of free online tastings.

The SCA represents over 200 small cheesemakers, and chair Catherine Mead says, "The future of Britain's farmhouse and specialist cheesemakers is in the balance – we could see many of the country's best cheeses lost forever as family farms and small cheesemaking businesses are pushed to the

wall. The national crisis has put untold pressure on our members. Restaurants, cafés and pubs, plus farmers markets and supermarket deli counters, closed overnight leaving cheese stores over filled, an abundance of spring milk with nowhere to go and only a few orders forthcoming.

"The good news is that it's never been easier to buy good cheese, either online or direct. The specialist cheese industry has mobilised almost overnight, often teaming up with other small food producers, to get good food to people in their local areas," she adds.

TALKING POINT: ADAPTING TO A CRISIS

The outbreak of Covid-19 has impacted cheesemongers across the UK. We spoke to two retailers about the steps taken to keep business going.

"Our online orders have multiplied exponentially"

SVETLANA KUKHARCHUK,
THE CHEESE LADY



Ever since I decided to close the physical shop, our online orders have multiplied exponentially.

Even though our online shop is not new, we are not used to seeing this much demand at this particular time of the year. We have significantly increased our online pantry items to offer the full variety of products that are usually available to our shoppers at the physical store and that go with our core product which is cheese. However, we did not add

anything that doesn't support our core business.

Our main suppliers are struggling to get stuff in from Europe and therefore it has a knock-on effect on our product availability.

"This unprecedented incident is bringing out the best in most people"

JEN GRIMSTONE-JONES, CHEESE ETC, THE PANGBOURNE CHEESE SHOP



We have always offered a free local delivery service - we initially started it instead of opening a second branch elsewhere, thinking that it was more cost

effective. So for customers within our local area there is no delivery charge and no minimum order when ordering through the website. We then have a few local customers who can't get online or into the shop so we also offer to do other bits of local shopping for them and deliver it along with their cheese. In light of the current situation we are offering this shopping service to all of our local deliveries so we are dropping off all sorts of items whilst we are out and about.

Our online orders have tripled and we are also taking orders over the phone. We are trying to order in things that customers are struggling to get so we've got flour coming in as well as other things that we don't usually stock, purely to try and help people buy the bits that they need.

I do think this sort of unprecedented incident is bringing out the best in most people and the worst in a minority. Our shop is in the heart of a thriving village and everyone is looking out for everyone else.

"Small retailers: get ready to play your trump cards"

Where do we go from here? I'm not too confident about my ability to see into the future. 20 years ago I worked alongside our current PM at *The Spectator*. If you had asked me which of us would be more likely to spend a decade learning about cheese, and which would be advocating government control of the railways, I wouldn't have got it right. Furthermore, the plan for this month's column was to write it fresh from a trip to California, proffering insight into the US fine cheese market. Instead, I've spent the last fortnight in isolation, watching from the safety of my TV and computer screens.

There are two pertinent observations that I've made during my quarantine. The first is the resourcefulness shown by colleagues in this sector in getting their wares to the consumer. Retailers have brought back home delivery to a level not seen since the Sixties. Producers have cooperated with erstwhile rivals to create complementary cheese board offerings, selling them direct to consumers, with fulfilment by courier companies. Some of these exercises may have been damage limitation exercises, shifting perishable stock that would normally have gone to farmers markets. Nonetheless, I hope that some of these alliances will continue.

Another thing that I learned, and which has surprised me, is the amount of eating taking place outside the home. Whether it's a 'meal deal', fast food, a Michelin-starred tasting menu, or something



JUSTIN TUNSTALL
RETAIL CONSULTANT

in between, Britons have been getting a lot of their calorie intake away from the home. With the hospitality industry currently on furlough, much more food is sought from retailers.

So how can speciality retailers ensure that they are best placed for the future? We will return to 'normal', but it is probably unwise to assume that things will resume exactly as before. The elements that I have looked at pose two threats: the exclusion of the 'middle men' (wholesalers and retailers) and an ever-greater reliance on supermarkets.

But we have trump cards to play. We know our customers, not via big data insights, but because we talk with them. We have personalities that make people feel good when they shop with us. I believe that we need to use all the tools we can to remind customers just what they're missing if they are unable to visit us at the moment. I'd use social media postings, e-mails, physical mailings and even phone calls to select customers to check that they're okay and remind them that we are here, and that we care about them.

After weeks of own-brand block mild Cheddar, our punters should be coming back in droves.

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SUMMER SIZZLERS

With lockdown in full swing, make the most of customers eating al fresco at home

When the weather warms up and the sun starts shining, the opportunity to be able to cook outside becomes one of the joys of the British summer time. Being prepared for a sudden rush on those clear sunny days is the key for retailers in ensuring that they can cater to customers when the demand for barbecue supplies begins.

Quality classics with modern twists

While consumers are in no way eschewing the traditional burger, sausage and bun combination, the desire for fresh combinations and unique twists on classics is there. These days consumers are inspired by a plethora of cookbooks, Instagram posts and various food and health trends, all of which can influence purchase decisions when it comes to creating al fresco meals.

Claire Roiser of Burwash Larder, says, "Burgers and sausages will always be huge for us as they are so popular. We are also seeing a growing demand for marinated meats and koftas. We are offering more roasted flavours as they are proving popular, along with Jalapeno and garlic and herb."

Consumers are also becoming more aware of the benefits of quality produce, and as a result will look towards their local butchers or independent retailer. It's worth considering how different elements of the shop could partner up to provide for barbecue occasions

such as the butchery and ambient sections. Liverpool-based food hall Delifonseca offers a range of locally sourced meats. Proprietor Candice Fonseca says, "Our in-house butchers' concession, Edge & Son, stocks a variety of locally sourced meats that are made for the summer season, from beef burgers and pork sausages to chicken. When combined with some of the condiments from our deli, the flavour is out of this world. Whether you like a spicy kick or a little bit of sweetness, adding a sauce or a rub to your meats will take it to that next level."

The influence of veganism

The rise of interest in veganism, as well as health and environmental concerns, has also shaken up classic barbecuing. Consumers have cited health as a main reason for signing up to campaigns such as Veganuary, with research from Kantar Worldpanel stating that this was the case for 42% of participants. Fraser McKevitt, head of retail and consumer insight at Kantar, says that while giving up meat and dairy for Veganuary was due to health reasons for many, the plant-based food boom is not primarily caused by a rise in numbers of people following strict vegan diets. He says, "Vegans still make up just 2% of the population and only 5% of us are vegetarian. Instead, the trend is being driven by many people making small changes and trying



“We’re also seeing more demand for products which aren’t traditionally used as accompaniments for barbecues”



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to eat more plant-based meals – and the retailers are responding accordingly.” It’s worth keeping in mind, therefore, that many shoppers looking for meat alternatives will be doing so in order to minimise their meat consumption. It’s key to have a good choice of meat-free options, both in the form of vegan ‘meats’ as well as plenty of fresh vegetables and other foods that can be barbecued, such as Halloumi.

Candice from Delifonseca explains, “With more and more people opting to go meat-free, there are plenty of options on the market when it comes to replicating the taste and texture of meat. Imitation sausages and burgers are gaining momentum and are hugely popular with consumers right now, even converting some die-hard meat lovers. Plant-based burgers using the likes of beetroot or sweet potato as the main ingredient are also gaining quite a fan base.

“If you want to move away from traditional barbecued meats, a great option is to create skewers using grilled cheeses and fresh vegetables,” she suggests. “We have a selection of worldwide cheeses at our deli counter, some of which work perfectly grilled alongside veggies such as aubergines and mushrooms, which also have that ‘meaty’ texture. Some soft cheeses will simply melt away when cooked so choose wisely; Halloumi is always a fail-safe choice along with Queijo Coalho.”

The need for vegan and vegetarian options doesn’t stop at the classic food items – there’s a whole host of condiments that help add the finishing touch to tasty meat-free meals. Rick Sheepshanks, founder of Stokes Sauces, says, “We’re seeing more and more consumers experiment with vegetarian alternatives, and our Stokes Chilli Jam is great when served things like halloumi burgers or kebabs.”

Tracklements has plenty of

RETAIL TIPS

How to push seasonal produce in-store

● INCREASE SIGNAGE

Create instant impact and attract the eye of customers with creative signposts to products made for barbecue season. Why not include interesting tidbits of information on local producers to create a conversation starter?

● HIGHLIGHT WIDER PRODUCE

Pick out products in-store that are not necessarily specific to barbecues but would make great accompanying purchases, for example a great local beer or wine option

● EYE CATCHING DISPLAYS

Ensure that seasonal-specific produce is clearly displayed to attract attention, and think ahead to anticipate customer needs. For example, place bread rolls and wraps near the meat counter or create a section near the front door with barbecue essentials

vegan-friendly options within its range of products, with marketing director Becky Vale adding, “Some Tracklements immediately spring to mind like Fresh Chilli Jam which brightens up every meat alternative, or Sweet Mustard Ketchup as a dip for grilled halloumi, but there are less obvious, equally delicious pairings to be found too, like our Fresh Mint Jelly which makes the perfect barbecue glaze for courgette and Halloumi skewers.”

With sales of meat-free foods expected to be in excess of £1.1 billion by 2024 (Mintel) it’s well worth taking stock of your summer barbecue options and ensuring there’s some good quality products to meet the needs of every customer.

“Imitation sausages and burgers are gaining momentum and are hugely popular with consumers right now, even converting some die-hard meat lovers. Plant-based burgers using the likes of beetroot or sweet potato as the main ingredient are also gaining quite a fan base”



Keep condiments interesting

No barbecue is complete without its accompaniments, and condiments such as ketchup, mustard and mayonnaise will always be popular. However, according to Rick from Stokes Sauces, the way that people are enjoying barbecues is changing. While the classics will continue to sell, these days shoppers are looking for new and exciting flavour pairings. He says, “Stokes Sweet & Sticky and Hot & Spicy BBQ sauces offer twists

on a summer classic, and we’re also seeing more demand for products which aren’t traditionally used as accompaniments for barbecues. For example, Stokes Red Onion Marmalade takes hot dogs to another level, while Stokes Bloody Mary Ketchup, which is made with a splash of vodka and Worcestershire sauce, gives burgers a grown-up kick.”

Versatility is also key when it comes to condiments, as barbecues have a variety of different foods

on offer, from roasted meats and vegetarian alternatives to fresh salads. Becky from Tracklements comments, “Whilst there are some Tracklements which will always be popular served alongside barbecued food, there are others which sell brilliantly in barbecue season thanks to their versatility. Our ever popular Fresh Chilli Jam, for example, makes a great marinade for chicken or prawns. There are other products like our range of mustards, or Cucumber & Pepper Relish which take barbecued

ADD SOME QUALITY TO YOUR BBQ OFFER THIS SUMMER WITH MEICA SAUSAGES HOT DOGS

Proving that offering popular fast foods to your BBQ fixture doesn’t mean you have to skimp on quality, Meica – a family German business that has been making top quality sausages since 1908 – offers a range of products that are ideal for shoppers looking to create the perfect hot dog at home.

Made from only quality cuts of meat, Meica offers a comprehensive range of the finest and authentic, pork-based sausages, all of which are perfect for the summer BBQ season – including Bockwurst, Frankfurters and Trueman’s American Style Hot Dogs.

Meanwhile, further tapping into the trend among the growing number of shoppers looking to reduce red meat intake, Meica has launched Turkey and Chicken Sausages in time for this year’s season. All Meica pork sausages are made from 77% meat, whilst turkey and chicken boast no less than 80% meat content. Mechanically recovered meat is never used in any Meica products, nor are additives, artificial colourings, lactose or gluten.

“Meica is Germany’s best-selling ambient sausage brand, accounting for almost half of all sales in their home country, and no country is better known for producing quality sausages than Germany,” explains Philip Marx, brand manager for Meica at fine food distributor RH Amar, which supplies the Trueman’s brand to speciality wholesalers throughout the UK.

For more information visit rhamar.com or contact 01494 530 200.



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FROM THE PRODUCER

**Maria Whitehead,
co-founder of
Hawkshead Relish**

WHAT HAWKSHEAD RELISH CONDIMENTS ARE POPULAR DURING BARBECUE SEASON?

Our BBQ sauce is perfect, but equally our other sauces and mustards are very popular at this time of year too.

ARE MORE CUSTOMERS LOOKING TO TRY NEW FLAVOURS?

We find especially around barbecue season, many people enjoy trying something a bit different like our Black Garlic Ketchup, which is perfect to use as both a marinade or a condiment. Another popular product is our Beetroot & Horseradish Chutney which is amazing with salads, on burgers or mixed into couscous.

WHAT PRODUCTS WORK WELL WITH MEAT-ALTERNATIVES OR VEGETABLES?

As all of our products are vegetarian, gluten-free and nut-free, they can help enhance any meal. Our Bloody Mary Ketchup is especially great with vegetables and has a lovely kick of warmth at the end.

burgers from great to glorious. Barbecues also provide a superb opportunity for products which make different and exciting salads; a potato salad is great but a potato salad made with Sweet Mustard Ketchup is exceptional, and a dollop of Strong Horseradish Cream added to a pasta salad adds an extra dimension."

She adds that the producer has seen the trend for 'hot' products continue, with customers looking for sauces that can complement quality meat: "Great meat deserves

products which enhance rather than overwhelm the flavour of the meat. Our Smoky Chilli Sauce, for example, has the perfect balance as it's made with enough scotch bonnet and chipotle chillies to give it a good pokey smokey heat but it has a rounded finish which doesn't overpower."

Keeping a good range of interesting condiments, quality meats and plenty of plant-based options will stand you in good stead for the summer barbecue season ahead.



THE SPICE PIONEER PERI-PERI CHICKEN

This African classic has a Spice Pioneer twist. The perfect zesty marinade to pair with chicken.

spicepioneer.com



THE MEATLESS FARM CO. BURGER

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meatlessfarm.com



GRAHAM'S MUSTARD WHOLEGRAIN MUSTARD

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grahamsmustard.com



CHARLIE & IVY'S CHIPOTLE MAYONNAISE

Packed full of punchy flavour, and guaranteed to liven up the most basic sandwich or chips.

charlieandivys.co.uk



MOR PORK SUPER GREEN VEG & LENTIL SAUSAGES

The earthiness of the green vegetables and peppery lentils is set off with a subtle hint of sweet chilli.

morfood.co.uk



VICKY'S KITCHEN THE RED ONE

A unique and traditional family recipe made with fresh ingredients for a whole heap of 'kick!'

vickkitch.com



MANFOOD BREAD & BUTTER PICKLE

An American-inspired pickle with an Asian twist, complete with sliced cucumbers and shallots.

welovemanfood.com



STOKES SAUCES ORIGINAL BBQ

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stokessauses.co.uk



LUCY'S DRESSINGS HONEY AND MUSTARD GOLDEN DRESSING

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lucysdressings.co.uk



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rebelioussauses.co.uk

Trueman's, the Top Dog

Tender, pre-cooked hot dogs made only with quality cuts of pork

Product available from fine foods distributor RH Amar
contact customer services, 01494 530 200 or
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THE SPECIALITY FOOD GUIDE TO OILS & VINEGARS

There's a plethora of great options out there.
We explore what to stock and why



It will come as a surprise to very few that great quality olive oils and vinegars are not only a must-stock essential for customers' cupboards, but for independent retailers of fine food, too. Quality, story, provenance and great taste come together in these surprisingly versatile bottles – and the fact that they're ambient makes them even more invaluable. Consider a supermarket oil and vinegar aisle: swathes of plastic bottles filled with often tasteless, mechanically-processed liquids. Now consider the options available to you as a fine food retailer: gift-worthy attractive packaging, delicious-tasting products made with passion, and a story. Isn't it time you maximized your oils and vinegars offering to really stand out from the crowd?

For example, have you considered stocking chilli oil? It's fast becoming a kitchen essential, as Ed Morse, founder of Banhoek Chilli Oil attests: "It is amazing to look back over the past few decades and reflect on how our tastes in food, the availability and quality of a host of ingredients from widely differing cuisines from around the world have radically changed the way we eat and cook. Not least in the way the palates of millions of people have developed and come to love the use of spices, particularly chilli, in our diet."

"One of the most flexible and easy ways to bring a little (or a lot of) spice to cooking, is to add high quality chilli oil. Particularly so when made with rapeseed oil. Besides being the most healthy of all the oils with zero cholesterol and being very low in saturated fats but high in Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, rapeseed oil has a smooth neutral flavour so the flavour of the chilli emerges beautifully. Unlike flavoured olive oils which can be very strongly flavoured, rapeseed based chilli oils offer much greater culinary flexibility and does not

interfere with the flavours of the ingredients with which it is mixed. Chillis are packed with vitamins, so a high quality, 100% natural, additive-free, GMO-free, consistently flavoured chilli oil is a winner for independent retailers focusing on delivering the highest quality product to their customers."

What should independents be looking out for when sourcing olive oil? "Firstly, only ever consider extra virgin olive oils – anything else is either from inferior fruit, has been heat treated, or worse, has been extracted with chemicals from the paste from first milling," explains Natalie Wheen, founder and director of Avlaki. "Aroma is the first indicator of quality; the oil should smell of olives, perhaps with citrus or floral notes, and other fresh aromas. Reject any oil with even a hint of mustiness, or with a scorched or rancid smell. Even if the oil is labelled extra virgin, it can have these defects."

"Taste is also important to understand what kind of an oil it is. Is it light, medium, pungent etc? Consider also the effect it has in the mouth and throat, but there is also the matter of personal taste too – retailers may come to know the tastes of their clients by their shopping habits; a shopping basket full of peppery, spicy items would indicate an inclination towards a heavier oil with stronger results in the mouth."

Ticking all the boxes

When it comes to vinegar, we're looking at a product which has everything the shopper of 2020 is looking for. Health credentials?

Check. Simple, natural ingredients? Check. Great quality and story? Check. Andy Harris, founder of The Vinegar Shed, has made vinegar his life – with some incredible oils thrown into the mix, too. "During the summer months, there's a huge variety of interesting vinegars and oils to get excited by for al fresco BBQ cooking, picnic prepping and all kinds of salads," says Andy. His recommendations? "I love using La Guinelle's Banyuls vinegar for a classic French vinaigrette dressing or their Saffron vinegar drizzled over tomato and Mozzarella salads or added into a gazpacho soup. Muscat vinegar is another favourite that I like to sprinkle over crab and shellfish salads. My own mandarin vinegar is great to drink neat or add to citrus salads and then there's habanero vinegar for chilli aficionados – it's really hot and good for marinades, drizzling over BBQ'd meats or for making a jerk seasoning!"

Meanwhile, Rupert Parsons, founder of Womersley Vinegar, has been creating a delicious array of infused vinegars "to delight your tastebuds" from all-natural ingredients since 2010. While the range consists of a plethora of flavours – Golden Raspberry & Apache Vinegar, or Lemon, Basil, Bay & Juniper Vinegar, anyone? – it's Rupert's Raspberry Vinegar which has particularly captured the attention of foodies across the UK. Multi award-winning and a firm favourite with all whom try it (direct quote from a customer: "I have been buying this for years and cannot do without it!"), it's a must-stock option with eye-catching packaging to boot.

“Olive oils should be considered by their individual merits - as with good cheeses or wines”

NATALIE WHEEN, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF AVLAKI

ADD SOME QUALITY TO YOUR VINEGARS LINE UP WITH ACETUM & MAZZETTI

Fine food distributor RH Amar is pleased to announce a new partnership with Acetum, the world's leading producer of Balsamic vinegar of Modena.

Offering two brands – Mazzetti and Acetum – the respect for tradition is at the heart of both, with ancient production methods safeguarded alongside cutting-edge production facilities to guarantee the highest quality.

Mazzetti L'Originale is produced using exclusive family recipes with a three-tiered offering including:

Everyday Salad – high quality 'two leaf' accredited vinegars specifically blended to be the perfect fit for the most popular Balsamic usage occasion.

Premium Signature – premium four and five leaf vinegars aimed at highly engaged 'foodies' who are prepared to pay more for quality and taste. Price points range from £6-£14 per bottle.

Special Edition series – making perfect gifts for food lovers, this DOP Tradizionale 12 – and 25-year aged Balsamic vinegar is produced in small batches using only traditional methods.

Meanwhile, Acetum offers retailers a total vinegar category solution, with a comprehensive range from entry level Balsamic vinegar through to a selection of the most popular speciality vinegars, including wine, sherry, cider and Prosecco vinegars. The labels have also been designed to help shoppers understand and navigate the category, featuring flavour profiles and usage recommendations to make the purchasing decision as easy as possible. rhamar.com



Balsamic Vinegar of Modena

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For more information, please contact RH Amar
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SEASONAL REFRESHMENT

We look at the trends and influences shaping today's summer drinks offerings

The UK's quality drinks category is a refreshing reminder that while some traditional options remain favourites – consider the long-standing popularity of cloudy lemonade and a refreshing pint of beer on a summer's day – it's well worth giving some of the category's newcomers a spot in your chiller shelves, too. By doing so you will satisfy the growing thirst of a widening range of clientele which is looking for invigorating new ways to refresh during the warmer seasons. That's not to say that trendy new products should take the place of tried-and-true favourites, just that it's worth making a little room to offer both.

The fine food retailer has more to consider than getting the balance right between traditional and trendy. There are a number of other boxes to be ticked by producers and retailers these days, with health arguably chief among them. Consider the state of play a few years ago, when sugar and preservatives were packed into (predominantly industrially-processed) soft drinks as a matter of course. In the fine food industry, soft drink-makers such as Luscombe and Belvoir stuck to their guns to produce delicious, natural beverages, and this method worked – their products have become mainstays in chiller cabinets and drinks shelves across the UK. Ugly Drinks, launched in 2015 by Hugh Thomas and Joe Benn, had health and transparency at the centre of their message since launch and have grown a loyal fan base since then. Meanwhile, the smoothie offering in this category has grown from strength to strength, with a recent launch from Coldpress – Pineapple, Banana & Coconut Smoothie – offering a healthy, summer holiday-inspired drink with

a great nutritional profile.

In terms of new trends on the block, hard seltzer is one to watch. A blend of sparkling water, an alcoholic spirit and sometimes a fruity flavour, it's a great ready-to-drink alternative to cans of pre-mixed cocktails and a confidently growing trend to boot. Co-founders of DRTY Drinks, Matija Pisk and Oli Clements, said, "The growth numbers around Hard Seltzer in the US – and the impact it's having on beer – is something no-one could have expected 12 months ago. With DRTY, we're really excited about catalysing this category in the UK and Europe." With its two-strong range – Raspberry Rose and White Citrus – DRTY are offering a tasty option for shoppers on the lookout for both refreshment and an alcoholic treat.

In the spirits aisle gin is still a top-seller, but do look further afield for products that can pair well with tonic and soda water. One such suggestion is a fragrant white port, topped up with ice and a good quality tonic water, it's a simple and delicious option for sunny days. Consider stocking a wide range of spirits, beyond vodka and gin, for customers to build their own cocktail repertoire – for example, a good quality tequila and Cointreau for homemade margaritas. For easy to understand pairing, try Seckforde – their range is designed to partner with specific types of spirits, taking the guesswork out for non-confident drinkers.

Finally, don't forget the abstainers. Thankfully, there's a great range of non-alcoholic options on the market now, from non-alcoholic spirits such as Willow to complex soft drink options such as Humble Warrior; there's a lot to explore in this vibrant category, and non-drinkers will be grateful for you doing so.

CIDER: A SUMMER SEASON CLASSIC

David Sheppy, master of cider at Sheppy's Cider, introduces the new generation of cider

"It is common knowledge within the category that the cider market benefits from seasonal peaks. Bank holidays, summer sporting events and sunny days have all provided opportunities for the on and off trade to maximise sales in previous years.

"Despite sweeter flavour profiles usually seeing increased success throughout the summer months, avoiding artificial sugars is still front of consumers' minds. It is therefore important for retailers who are reassessing their seasonal offering to ensure they stock ciders from producers known for their premium, top quality ranges, where the amount of pure apple juice is put before added flavourings.

"With the market being crowded with very sweet commercial fruit ciders, Sheppy's purposely introduced its Cider with Elderflower and Cider with Raspberry variants to differentiate itself. Clearly communicating that our ciders are made with fruit, rather than being a fruit cider, allows us to emphasise the importance that apples play in the taste. This gives retailers an unrivalled option to cater for customers looking for a premium product with a drier taste."

“The fine food retailer has more to consider than getting the balance right between traditional and trendy”



THOUGHTFUL FORAGER BRIGHT BLONDE ALE

A refreshingly light and citrusy ale with mild flavours of herbs
cottage delight.co.uk



ISLE OF WIGHT DISTILLERY MERMAID GIN

Made using 10 ethically sourced botanicals, complex blend of fresh organic lemon zest and peppery grains of paradise.
isleofwightdistillery.com



CALEM WHITE & DRY PORT

Slightly dry yet delicately smooth and well-balanced, with floral and fresh fruit aromas.
calem.pt



BOTTLESHOT COLD BREW COFFEE OAT M*LK

The right balance of nutty and naturally sweet notes from oat milk blended with cold brew coffee.
bottleshotbrew.com



HAWKES DOOM & BLOOM HARD ROSE CIDER

Light coral in colour and fruity on the palate, the crisp and full-on fruitiness is tempered with a subtle sweetness.
brewdo.com



BOBBY'S SCHEIDAM DRY GIN

Fragrant with notes of spice including cinnamon and pepper and rosehip, as well as zesty with citrus notes.
bobbysdrygin.com



CHAMPAGNE BILLECART SALMON BRUT ROSE

A blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier and Pinot Noir vinified as red wine.
champagne-billecart.fr



GENIE LIVING DRINKS LEMON & GINGER

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geniedrinks.co.uk



BIDDENDEN VINEYARDS BIDDENDEN SPARKLING APPLE JUICE

A sparkling apple juice made with 100% pure fruit juice, no added water or sugar and not from concentrate.
biddendenvineyards.com



GUNNA PINK PUNK RASPBERRY LEMONADE

Made using natural juices and fruit extracts, with no artificial colours or preservatives.
gunnadinks.com

JACK MONROE



THE RISE OF GOODWILL

7 food businesses creating goodwill in the community – and what you can learn from them

WORDS: NATASHA LOVELL-SMITH, EDITOR OF GREAT BRITISH FOOD MAGAZINE

There's no doubt that retailers and food businesses have been faced with utterly unprecedented challenges due to the coronavirus crisis. But as complicated and unexpected as the last few weeks have been for retailers, there are also plenty of heartening stories of businesses stepping up to support local communities, from offering home delivery services to ensuring key workers and NHS workers get access to essential supplies. Here Natasha Lovell-Smith picks seven innovative companies and individuals taking the initiative...

1 Crowd-fund to deliver free food to food banks and NHS workers

Josh Katz and Mattia Bianchi, founders of London's Berber & Q Grill House and Berber & Q Shawarma Bar, are supporting hospital workers on the front line of the crisis by raising funds to deliver their food to NHS workers around London. Josh, Mattia and the team are fundraising through donations from a Go Fund Me page,

asking those who can to help during this challenging time. At the time of publishing the page had already raised over 30K.

Josh said, "In London, within a week, our way of life has been turned upside down and whilst it's natural to focus on our own individual problems, which can often feel overwhelming, in times of crisis, we have to pull together. We want to do something that offers tangible help to those on the front line, in the hope we can make a small difference so will be cooking our food and delivering it to NHS workers around London." Crowd-funding this kind of initiative this is a good way of supporting the local community while ensuring your own takings aren't stretched even

further. If you're unsure on precisely who to fundraise for, donating to your local food bank is a simple way to guarantee your money goes straight to those who need it.

2 Use social media to create a community and offer advice on cooking with cans and staple ingredients

Take inspiration from anti-poverty campaigner, author and TV cook Jack Monroe – AKA The Bootstrap

Cook – and offer recipe ideas to your customers via social media. If you're not familiar with Jack, she's best known for her blog and recipe books offering innovative ways to make the most out of tinned food and storecupboard staples. On Twitter every day from 5pm she answers streams of questions about what to cook with certain (often disparate) ingredients under the #JackMonroesLockdownLarder hashtag. It's proving hugely popular and is something retailers could action on a smaller scale in their own communities, via social media, newsletters, email or even over the phone. Instagram or Facebook Live are both easy to use and a great way of engaging with your customers.

3 Tap into the home-baking boom and offer virtual cooking classes

Retailers and suppliers are reporting a huge upsurge in demand for flour (particularly bread flour) sparked by a revived interest in home bread-making during the coronavirus lockdown. As well as making these items easily available to shoppers via delivery boxes and hampers, a more innovative approach could be sharing the expertise of your staff by putting on virtual baking or cooking classes. They don't have to be professional quality or particularly sophisticated – the personal touch goes a long way – just keep them simple, informative and engaging. Ruth Macintyre, founder of award-winning Surrey microbakery Ruth's Little Kitchen, has just launched twice weekly baking classes via Instagram Live, held Monday and Thursday mornings at 10am. She said: "During this time I just want to be able to bring people together and for us to collectively grow as one community. I love cooking and baking and can only hope that this will spark a little bit of joy into the lives of those joining the sessions".

4 Get involved in the #DonateADinner fundraiser

Chef and catering Jimmy Garcia has just launched a similar initiative to Berber & Q called #DonateADinner, whereby consumers donate £3+ to go towards a meal for families in heavily impacted areas. This includes those who rely heavily on free lunches





JIMMY GARCIA



BERBER & Q

while they are out of school and particularly vulnerable communities, such as the elderly people out of work due to business closures.

He's currently working with Wandsworth Council but would like to see the initiative rolled out across the UK and get more retailers and businesses involved. Jimmy said, "By donating just £3, which is around the same price as a coffee, you can help create a wholesome meal that will be lovingly made, with the view to being distributed to heavily impacted areas. It costs £3,350 to feed 150 homes with 7 meals a week; we want to raise awareness so that more councils get on board and we can spread this across London and further afield - ideally, we would want to feed all key workers in the UK and have lots of businesses getting involved."

5 Collaborate with like-minded operators and offer consumers small luxuries

Fashionable London bakery Crosstown Doughnuts, known for its sourdough doughnuts, was very quick to act when the magnitude of the crisis became apparent, forming a collective with two like-minded local producers: The Estate Dairy and Millers Bakery. Together, the companies have collaborated to deliver boxes of fresh food and drinks across the capital, containing essentials like eggs, bread, milk and butter as well as luxury doughnuts.

JP Then, founder of Crosstown

Doughnuts, said, "It might seem a little strange for a doughnut brand to be selling pantry essentials and fruit and vegetables, but it is a pivot we decided to make last week to protect as many jobs as possible within our business. By banding together, we are protecting hundreds of jobs."

He continued, "Any sense of a normal approach to life has gone out the window. In this time of great need, for both individuals and businesses, we should focus on the fundamentals that we control. In our case, it's the ability to continue delivering the best food to our customers and ensuring a huge amount of fresh produce does not go to waste, but through a newly set-up, safe and fast channel. We are also keen to hear from any other independent businesses who are interested in joining the collective

CROSTOWN COLLECTIVE



and adding their own fresh produce to the food boxes."

Chef Jimmy Garcia recommends thinking outside the box when it comes to theming your offering: "We're working with our amazing suppliers to create delicious isolation hampers for the many nights-in we'll all be having. Our fondue kit, for example, is perfect for anyone who has had to cancel a ski trip. We can bring the chalet experience to them!"

6 Take payments over the phone

It might seem like a small step, but for vulnerable shoppers who can't leave the house and don't feel confident reimbursing family or neighbours using online banking, this is a practical step that could make a lot of difference. High end Northern supermarket chain Booths announced on social media that it will start taking payment for goods over the phone in order to support older and more vulnerable customers, saying: "This will allow those who are sending friends, neighbours or relatives to shop for them to pay for the shopping remotely." Customers in store are asked to make their way to the clearly marked checkout in store, where an assistant will scan through the shopping then place a call for the shopping to be paid for over the telephone.

"These are unprecedented times and Booths wanted to help assist the most vulnerable members of our

communities that are affected by the virus," the team states. "We have limited capacity for deliveries, so we are asking customers to reserve this delivery service for only those in great need."

7 The power of clear communication and protecting staff

Of all the multiple retailers Waitrose seems to have been the quickest to act throughout the coronavirus crisis, recently implementing the following practical rules across its stores:

- Limiting customer numbers in store so that social distancing can be properly observed
- Introducing new stickers at the floors of checkouts and welcome desks to manage distance between customers
- Introducing dedicated marshals per store to ensure the 2m rule is inspected when queueing inside and outside
- Installing protective checkout screens and special visors to protect staff

The transparency of in-store policy and equal focus on protecting both customers and staff is something indies should emulate and communicate to shoppers via social media and on the shop floor.



TALKING SHOP

There's really only one topic of discussion at the moment: Coronavirus. The outbreak has impacted on every aspect of daily life, turning things that seemed certain into uncertainty.

While we have all been facing daily challenges I have continued to be inspired by the stories that have been flooding in about how food and drink businesses across the country have been tackling them head-on. A word that continues to crop up in this ongoing situation is 'adapting'.

For us office-based workers here at *Speciality Food* HQ it's been a transition to working from home. After becoming used to the daily routine of driving to and from work and interacting with colleagues, there was a sudden change to working and living at home. While some adjustments were needed, it frankly pales in comparison to the 180 degree turn that some businesses have had to go through.

I have been continuously inspired by those businesses that have adapted to this ever-evolving new landscape in unprecedented ways. I've spoken to retailers that have set up a home delivery service for their local communities in 48 hours, gin distilleries that have used supplies of ethanol to make hand sanitiser for frontline workers, and businesses that have set up an online shop within days. I've heard about staff that have taken on new roles and communities that have worked together to ensure that everyone is able to get the essential food items they need.

While the challenges and struggles are absolutely present and an everyday reality for so many companies, my inbox has been flooded with these positive stories from retailers and brands that have acted quickly and fought for survival. It's encouraging to see how strong people and businesses can be when the chips are down, and the creative solutions that can come from hardship. While certain measures have been put into place out of necessity, it also seems that it has given some owners a new perspective on their business. It's easy when one's bricks-and-mortar shop is busy to never quite get round to updating the website or implementing online shopping capabilities. Now that has become essential, it's time to utilise every resource and helping hand available to set up the strongest possible business for the future.

We always want to hear the opinions of our readers – do you have a story to share, expertise to pass on or a comment to make? Please do get in touch with us via lucy.macdonald@aceville.co.uk.

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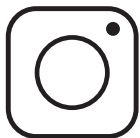
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5 MINUTES WITH... FREDDIE GORE-BROWNE, CO-FOUNDER OF PRIME BAR

WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?

Opening a surf hotel on the beach!

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

Gardener.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Nature, surfing, being in the mountains and running.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?

Cold calling.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?

Meeting people in the food world – they are all so nice and so helpful.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?

How many things can go wrong on any day!

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?

I absolutely love it – it's full of people following their passions.

TEA OR COFFEE?

I love a lapsang souchong.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?

Fish tacos – nothing beats this on a beach after a surf, with a beer. I would then drift off pretty happily.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?

Hard choices, easy life. Easy choices, hard life. (Jerzy Gregory)

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?

I worked in Brazil for a year and on one of the religious festivals we ate a traditional feijoada with a pig's nose, trotter, tail and ear.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?

Gill Mellor's cookbook *Gather*.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?

Savoury, that's why we make PRIME Bars!



SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

The next issue will include:

- Labelling & Packaging
- Home Baking
- Sweet & Savoury Biscuits
- Summer Cheese
- Drink Trends

YORKSHIRE TEA SPOT THE DIFFERENCE ANSWERS

Doors, Stoat, Lamb, Sheep, Cow, Cricketer, Tractor, Robin, Buildings, Walker

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Contact Jess on 01206 505901 or email jessica.stevenson@aceville.co.uk for more information

The final word on fine food

TRIED & TESTED

MOMA ORIGINAL OAT DRINK

I'm a big fan of oat 'milks' so was keen to try this unsweetened drink made with wholegrain oats from MOMA. I found that it blended well in cups of tea – a crucial test – as well as being equally tasty in cereal. This is a delicious offering that I would absolutely recommend, and their range of granola and porridge is also well worth a try!

momafoods.co.uk

GREEN STEM CBD TONIC WATER

As someone partial to a gin in the evenings, I'm always on the hunt for new mixers to try. What I like about this tonic water is that it is infused with elderflower for a floral taste as well as natural sugar-free sweeteners for that hint of sweetness. The 10mg of CBD has been added for its wellbeing properties, too, creating a well-balanced and enjoyable beverage.

greenstemcbd.com



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



ITALIAN STORE CUPBOARD ESSENTIALS

We take a look at the staples needed to craft classic dishes

For lovers of Italian cuisine, there's a selection of ingredients that always need to be on-hand. Whether whipping up a quick but delicious pasta or a more complicated dish, there are certain ingredients that have become as essential in British households as in Italy. As a retailer it's key to have a good stock of the basics where possible to become a one-stop-shop for customers; and true to Italian style, quality is crucial.

EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

A great quality oil is the top of the list in Italian kitchens. Extra Virgin is the most natural form of olive oil, made by crushing the olives and extracting the juice without the use of chemicals. It's worth having a mild-flavoured one for cooking and another, more distinctly-flavoured option for drizzling on salads and other dishes.

RICE

Essential for creating risottos, with the main varieties being arborio, camaroli and vialone.

PASTA

No cupboard would be complete without a couple of different varieties of dried pasta. Aside from classic shapes such as penne there are also other interesting options including orecchiette, ziti and tagliatelle. Soup pastas like orzo are a form of short-cut pasta that

are ideal for not only soups but stews and salads as well.

BALSAMIC VINEGAR

Traditional Balsamic has so many different uses. It can be used over salads, dips for breads and drizzling on vegetables. The older, sweeter varieties are delicious drizzled over ice cream, where their fruity flavour is perfectly balanced.

TINNED GOODS

Tomatoes are used as a base for a variety of pasta dishes, bakes and soups. Quality is key for that authentic flavour, and whole peeled tomatoes are considered to offer the best. It's also advisable to stock a range of beans such as cannellini.

HERBS AND SPICES

Herbs such as thyme and oregano add a delicious Italian flavour, and good quality options will go a long way.

Are you passionate about Italian food and drink?

Do you have a story, advice or comment on this subject? If so we would love to hear from you, so please get in touch via lucy.macdonald@aceville.co.uk.



THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Lawrence McCarthy is the new head chef at The Salt Room in Brighton



Despite only moving to Brighton very recently to take up the head chef position at The Salt Room in February, I already have a few favourite foodie hotspots. I grew up in West Sussex and I'm always keen to support local businesses especially when it comes to smaller, independent shops, which is something that Brighton has in abundance. I also like to know that the food I'm buying is locally sourced and that I am doing my bit to help the planet – buying locally is extremely important for our food supply chain and it means I know the farmers and suppliers are getting their fair share of the money made.

My favourite one-stop-shop is Taj the Grocer. This Arab supermarket is a real feast for the eyes with row upon row of colourful fruit and vegetables on display everywhere. It stocks every ingredient you might need, but I also find it a great place to find inspiration for new recipes to cook both at home and at the restaurant – the staff are really knowledgeable too and often give me tips and tricks. Lamb and chicken are butchered to order and they have a selection of exotic fish.

Although I'm not vegan or vegetarian, I'm a big fan of Infinity Foods, the local vegan/vegetarian store. When I'm off work, I lean more towards a healthier way of eating and thinking and I always leave the

store feeling inspired to try new things and with ingredients I otherwise wouldn't have. Infinity Foods is always introducing interesting and innovative products like their raw seaweed tapenade, chilli tofu sausages and coconut 'bacon'. Plus, their baked goods selection is extremely impressive, the sourdough bread from their bakery is excellent.

On days off, I also like to visit Food-illc. It's a small café and eatery, a bit like the Brighton version of Ottolenghi's delis – they produce big platters of fresh imaginative salads everyday which always look and smell amazing. They also have a selection of desserts which go down well with my children. Sometimes we just pop in for a vanilla cheesecake or banoffee pie. Not only do they serve feel-good food, the service is excellent.

If I am looking for special cuts of meat, whether it be for a special occasion or just a treat, I go to The Barfield Butchers. The meat selection is incredible and the quality is second to none – all of their meat is free-range and naturally reared in Sussex or nearby counties. I often buy their meat packs, where they pick a selection of their finest cuts of meat for you, but my favourite is their award-winning sausages which are handmade at the shop using the finest cuts from the shoulder of their free-range Sussex pork.

DIARY DATES

Dates correct at time of going to print

June

29th-30th

IMBIBE LIVE

Olympia, London

live.imbibe.com

July

23rd-26th

LONDON COFFEE FESTIVAL

The Truman Brewery, London

londoncoffeefestival.com

July/August

31st-2nd

ROYAL BATH & WEST SHOW

The Showground, Somerset

bathandwest.com

September

1st-4th

CIBUS

Parma, Italy

cibus.it

6th-8th

SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR

Olympia, London

specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk

7th-9th

FARM SHOP & DELI SHOW

NEC, Birmingham

farmshopanddelishow.co.uk

7th-9th

FOOD & DRINK EXPO

NEC, Birmingham

foodanddrinkexpo.co.uk



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