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SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS

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THE GREAT STOCK GIVEAWAY

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the May issue of *Speciality Food*.

As I write, lockdown rules are relaxing further and further; social lives are slowly but surely returning, restaurants are serving again – outdoor dining only – and non-essential shops are opening once more.

While we all have learned from bitter experience that jumping into 'normal life' too quickly can have catastrophic effects, it's also true to say that there's an optimism in the air; and we bring you that optimism within these pages.

Read on for delicious summer specialities, from barbecue-ready foods to refreshing seasonal drinks and snacks for on-the-go (now that it's allowed). We share the expertise of professionals across the food industry, from SME champions to trend forecasters, so that you feel as prepared as possible for the upcoming months of freedom.

Plus, alongside this issue you will receive *Cheese Buyer 2021*: a comprehensive view of the cheese industry right now.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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As Covid rules ease, retail revival begins

Fine food independents are benefitting from a rebound in footfall as the reopening of the economy progresses. Will it last?

Shoppers flooded high streets and shopping centres as the easing of lockdown restrictions began in April, and fine food independents are poised to benefit from the fresh resurgence of retail.

In the first week of the reopening of non-essential retailers and outdoor hospitality in England and Wales, footfall in UK retail destinations rose by nearly 88%, with high streets clocking growth of 93% and shopping centres even higher at 127%. Despite bad weather and the fact that Scotland and Northern Ireland remained in lockdown at the time the data was recorded, footfall saw enough of a rebound to come in at just a quarter lower than 2019 pre-pandemic levels.

Bricks and mortar shops are making a comeback, but will this momentum be sustained? "We expect this rebound to continue," confirms Nick Brackenbury, co-founder of retail tech firm, NearSt.

SPECIALIST **FOOD** AND **DRINK** STORES SAW A SALES **UPLIFT** OF **28.6%** YEAR-ON-YEAR IN **FEBRUARY**
SOURCE: BARCLAYCARD

"People want to get back out and shop, and many have saved a great deal over the lockdown that they're now looking to spend." Indeed, IGD's latest Shopper Confidence Index found that consumers are focusing on quality in food and drink as higher earners now have more disposable income to trade up for premium products.

The return of discovery

While the largest rises in footfall were seen in Central London – an area that had lost its typical buzz during the UK's successive lockdowns as fewer commuters travelled in – regional cities and smaller towns also saw significant growth in shopper numbers.

Across the board, consumers appear to be ready to get out into shops again. "I think people have really missed the ability to be both inspired and surprised by what's in their local stores, and the social shopping experience that comes with it," Nick tells *Speciality Food*. "Algorithms can be effective at suggesting more of the things we've already looked at online, but the personal recommendation that's a bit unusual but turns out to be really interesting is what local stores can uniquely deliver."

New product discovery and exceptional customer service are areas that are at the heart of what fine food retailers do, and they will be a part of the retail experience that shop owners are keen to revive over the coming months as restrictions continue easing. Retail analyst Nelson Blackley predicted that in the short term, retail would remain somewhat subdued due to the prevalence Covid-19 – but the desire for social shopping would soon outweigh consumers' fears.

"Longer term, I am convinced most people will eventually return to shop in stores because they crave that human connection," Nelson says. "This social aspect of shopping (whether the marketplace or the meeting place) cannot be underestimated as it's been central to our town and city centres since Greek and Roman times."

As the customer experience improves and consumer confidence is strengthened, the fortunes of small, independent retailers are expected to improve.

According to data from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), nearly six in 10 (58%) small businesses said that they expect their performance to improve this quarter. This was the highest proportion of respondents since the summer of 2015.

Supporting local

Independent businesses are set to be central to the retail recovery. According to research by Cornerstone Tax, more than half of shoppers – 53% – will support independent traders and shops. Recent research from Barclaycard Payments showed that independent food and drink retailers have already felt the benefits of this support, with shoppers spending an extra 63% at food and drink specialist stores, such as butchers, bakeries and greengrocers, in February compared to the previous year.

Meanwhile, nine in 10 people who shopped locally during the pandemic said they would support smaller and independent businesses after restrictions eased as well.

"All the research shows that there will be a myriad of resilient founders and entrepreneurs to support, new businesses to look out for, and a British public ready to back them all – particularly those local independents so important for our communities and our economy," said David Hannah, principal consultant at Cornerstone Tax. "This truly shows we are a nation of shopkeepers."

Food retail sees continued growth

For food and drink retailers, marking the one year anniversary of lockdown meant confronting the record-breaking grocery sales of 2020 and discerning what this will mean for sales once Covid restrictions are fully lifted.

As IGD's data shows, consumers are increasingly focused on high-quality food, whether that is because they discovered the difference after making the switch during the lockdown panic buying rush or because they are spending their typical hospitality budget on at-home dining and are keen to continue treating themselves. But although shoppers made 117 million fewer trips to the supermarket in March 2021 versus March 2020, when panic buying peaked, grocery spending remains "considerably higher than pre-pandemic levels", according to Kantar.

53% PLAN TO **SUPPORT** INDEPENDENT **TRADERS** AND **SHOPS** THIS **YEAR**
SOURCE: CORNERSTONE TAX

"While grocery growth has slowed against 2020, sales are still much higher than the same 12 weeks in 2019 – up by 15.6%," says Fraser McKevitt, head of retail and consumer insight, at Kantar Worldpanel Division. Combined with the growing focus on supporting local and the desire for premium food and drink, this spells a recipe for success for speciality food retailers.

> "People have really missed the ability to be both inspired and surprised by what's in their local stores, and the social shopping experience that comes with it"



"At present I am slightly optimistic..."



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES

What is running a speciality food shop going to be like as we tiptoe through the lockdown lifting steps?

For the first three months of 2021 our sales have been down by 6.8%. As customer count over this period was significantly down by 19.5% it was helpful that average spending rose by 11.4%.

Location has been a lottery during Covid-19. Unfortunately our local area has particularly suffered from a drop in passing trade which is a very important part of the business.

However our Easter experience has again suggested that there is a speciality food bounce at times of seasonal festivities during the pandemic, despite daily sales being down. This trend has been noted at Christmas, which showed growth of + 7.9%, Valentine's Day +40% (it fell on a Saturday this year, which helped) and Mother's Day +6.1%. However, Easter Week 2021 knocked the egg out of the park being 13.2% up on 2020 and 27.3% up on 2019.

This came like a shot in the arm and a very pleasant surprise. There were a number of factors in play. We had unseasonably good weather throughout the week. Local customers were keen to take advantage of the warmer air and get out of the house and there were only limited establishments where unusual and imaginative products could be found. All of our Easter eggs and gift ideas sold particularly well. This year will not be 'The winter of our discount eggs' I am very relieved to say.

However, for how long this Easter bounce or bunny hop is going to continue divides opinion among staff and suppliers alike. It is true to say for us that last year lockdown sales remained positive for the several weeks after the pandemic started. However once hospitality opened and the Eat Out To Help Out scheme got going there was an alarming drop in sales during the third quarter. At this point the fear was that post pandemic sales would flatline and it was going to be a challenge to restore "normal" sales going forward. Yet the fourth quarter of 2020, with continuing pandemic uncertainty, still bounced back strongly with sales passing expectations due to strong Christmas speciality food and wine sales.

This time round we are hoping to avoid a crash landing without actually knowing how to do it. The main focus will be on the phrase I saw quoted recently "Out is the new in". From 12th April according to Government guidelines, "Food and alcohol can be consumed outside using tables and chairs". Depending on location and bearing in mind we have closed our in-store café this should be a key sales driver for us. Although the actual management of this will cause some difficulty. Table orders only, customer information gathering and a lack of space will limit sales.

On the good news front, from 3rd April we have tentatively reopened the fine food market with a small group of essential traders. Hopefully we can grow this through the following months to achieve a nearly normal market by 17th May when groups of up to 30 people can congregate and finally arriving on 21st June when all restrictions are lifted. Finally, we are still focusing on customer deliveries and online orders to reach out to as many customers as possible. Sales in this area are still holding up well albeit erratically.

At present, I am slightly optimistic because of three reasons. The arrival of the warmer weather, the ability to hold outdoor activities and an increased desire from customers to have food delivered out. To me it all indicates this should be a better summer than last year. And in the summer months a food shop runs itself, I have heard it said. Pandemic permitting. As a famous expression of my youth urged, "Let it all hang out".

> "At present I am slightly optimistic because of several reasons. To me it all indicates this should be a better summer than last year. And in the summer months a food shop runs itself, I have heard it said. Pandemic permitting. As a famous expression of my youth urged, 'Let it all hang out'"

4 ways to boost customer retention post-pandemic

1 COMMUNICATION IS KEY
"Keeping in close communication with the customers that have come to you during the pandemic will be really crucial in developing that relationship and keeping it going as things start to return to normal," said Catherine Erdly, founder of the Resilient Retail Club. "The key thing here is continuing to use all of the digital tools that are at your disposal – from your email list to your social media to your website."

2 DELIGHT YOUR CUSTOMERS
"Customer retention is about continuing to delight the customer with things that will be interesting and useful for them," Catherine said. Now that they've become familiar with your selection, Catherine suggested coming up with a schedule of regular themes to keep them coming back for more. "It's all about coming up with new ways of presenting products or introducing new products so that the customers regularly have a reason to come back and shop with you."

3 ENSURE A GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
"If [new customers] have been well looked after and enjoyed the foods, usually happy consumers, in my experience, will return," says Stuart Gates of The Seasoned Grocer. This means there is more reason than ever to take a fresh look at your in-store and online shopping experiences, ensuring customers are satisfied at every turn.

4 SHOW OFF YOUR USP
With more consumers shopping with their values on their sleeves, it's increasingly important for retailers to communicate their shop's ethics. "This will help attract the customers that are a natural fit for shopping with you," Catherine says. "Topics such as sustainability are top of customers' minds, but also encourage them to think about the impact of shopping locally."

> "Anonymous mass consumption is being rejected by a growing number of consumers. The pandemic has highlighted our longing to connect with people and places even more. More than ever, consumers are keen to buy brands that feel authentic and they can identify with"
>
> **WOUTER VAN DONGEN, FOUNDER OF THE HYPER LOCALIST**

Britain leads global chocolate innovation

Chocolate sales boomed during the pandemic as consumers turned to food for comfort and indulgence, but innovation in the sector has taken a dip over the past 12 months, according to new research by Mintel.

Mintel's New Products Database found that there have been fewer new choices on retailers' shelves, as chocolate innovation fell by 25% over the past year. However, the UK has proved to be a bright spot for chocolate, as British producers showed that the plant-based sector is ripe for new products.

Britain led the vegan chocolate market in plant-based and no-animal new chocolate launches over the past year, claiming almost one in five vegan chocolates (17%).

"Plant-based chocolate is one of the latest trends dominating the confectionery industry," Sergio Restrepo, VP of innovation at premium ethical chocolate company, Luker Chocolate, said. "Its success stems from the core drivers of the conscious consumer: health, climate change, sustainability, and animal welfare."





SPOTLIGHT ON: **BREXIT**

One in four small businesses have halted exports to the European Union due to complications caused by Brexit, according to recent research by the Federation of Small Businesses. But opportunities remain

"Big rules applied to small companies"



JAMES MCGOLDRICK, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF BRADFORDS BAKERS

"We had to stop exporting our gifts to the EU because with the additions of extra charges and the requirement of extra certificates, for which there was a cost, it quickly started to outweigh the original costs of the goods. We're a small business, so it's hard to find the time and manpower it takes to keep up with all of these changes and new demands. Our gift hampers that were headed to the EU included the likes of cheeses, patés, wines, and tins of foods like soups or haggis. If a hamper includes all these items, we must get a certificate for each individual item. Brexit has meant that big rules have been applied to small companies."

Opportunities for expansion



JAMES MONK, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR AT BUSINESS WEST

"A report published by the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), showed that while exports of food and drink to the UK's top markets fell in the first half of 2020, value sales increased by 0.3% to China. It's important for companies to be aware of markets such as China that have a growing interest in British products. As China's economy has experienced an upturn, its culinary taste has also become more sophisticated. Instead of consuming fast, cheap Western food, shoppers are looking to use their growing disposable incomes to buy higher quality and more varying food products. With the new Free Trade Agreements coming into fruition, such as the one signed between the UK and Japan, this is offering greater opportunity for UK food and drink companies to expand overseas."

"Brexit solutions are available"



JAMES WITHERS, CEO OF SCOTLAND FOOD AND DRINK

"As things stand, the UK has become a more unreliable trading partner. Crucially, if we can't guarantee to get products to market at the right time, our EU customers will go elsewhere. There are jobs in some of the most fragile communities of Scotland reliant on this trade. The UK/EU deal has scope for simplification. That now needs to be top of the agenda for UK ministers. Solutions are available and our food and drink exporters need them now."

Green Brexit promises "fallen short"

A coalition of the UK's leading green groups concluded that the government has "fallen short" of delivering a Green Brexit – but there is still "huge" potential for the food and farming sectors, experts say.

Greener UK, which has tracked Britain's environmental standards since 2017, said the government's promise to "maintain and enhance" protections after it left the European Union had not been met. But while some protections were judged to be weaker now than they were pre-Brexit, such as chemicals, nature, air quality and waste, the group also noted positive developments, including the government's "huge ambition in overhauling farming policy in England". Gareth Morgan, head of farming and land use policy at the Soil Association, told *Speciality Food* that at best, the prospect of a Green Brexit is a "work in progress, stronger on rhetoric than delivery".

Head of Sales & Marketing - Willy's Live Probiotic Foods

Required to join innovative Living Probiotic Foods Producer. Must have a real interest in probiotic and live foods, gut health and sustainability. Experience in Digital and ECOM necessary. Our key customers are independent retailers.

I'm looking for an organized and highly effective Sales and Marketing Manager to assist in advertising and selling our LIVE products. You should have strong interpersonal, leadership, and communication skills; charisma and a sense of humour also appreciated! An in-depth knowledge and understanding of sales and marketing goes without saying. Based in Herefordshire.

Your responsibilities will include:

- Conception and execution of a multi-strand sales and marketing strategy.
- Promoting the company's existing Live products and introducing innovative new products to this exiting space.
- Preparing budgets & analysing performance against budget plans, scheduling expenditure.
- Developing detailed sales & marketing plans for all media channels and sales teams to enable natural organic sales.
- Generating unique sales plans and engaging campaigns, helping to develop pricing strategies.
- Building Willy's brand, driving strategies to increase probiotic awareness and observing industry trends – keeping the brand relevant in a fast-paced market.
- Developing a solid & functional analytics strategy to ensure our marketing is relevant and our service excellent: progressive profiling; surveys; webinar; mailchimp etc.
- Producing KPI's on a monthly basis - track all marketing and sales data.
- Good understanding of latest CRM systems.
- Researching and developing marketing opportunities and plans, understanding consumer requirements, identifying market trends within healthy /live /probiotic arena.
- Recruiting, training and managing to ensure our marketing and sales team is top class.
- Managing existing sales & marketing staff.
- Maintaining relationships with speciality and independent customers, understanding their issues & needs. Anticipating all marketing opportunities.
- Staying current in this ever-evolving industry.
- Communicating & building relationships with printers and other service providers to help marketing projects come to fruition.
- Work with the team to build a core of influencers and bloggers to help promote our amazing healthy live products.

Office based
Salary – according to experience
Contact us: **Nickie.mackenzie@willysacv.com**
www.willysacv.com

WILLY'S

"How to back new brands"



EMMA JONES
ENTERPRISE NATION

At Enterprise Nation, our job is to deliver support to help people to start and grow their own successful business. Over the past 12 months the majority of that support has been focused on supporting businesses to 'do more online.' Small businesses have pivoted and we have done the same. Education has been offered on how to connect with customers through social platforms, onboard onto delivery apps, and sell through powerful marketplaces. Small food and drink businesses have been amazing in their response but they are about to pivot again and are readying themselves for physical trade and the economic re-opening.

We are optimistic about the figure of £200bn that has been gathered in UK household savings, as this is a clear indicator of pent-up demand and spend. Research surveys and polls show a significant proportion of this spend will stay local as shoppers head to their nearest high street to once again enjoy the experience of physical retail, entertainment, and human company.

Brands that will thrive in this environment are those that have built strong online followings and fans during the pandemic. We expect customers will go in search of these brands and elect to buy from them in person – potentially whilst meeting the face behind the brand too. This spells opportunity for any stockist!

In looking for new brands to stock, look for those who have sold well online and honed their digital skills over the past year, as well as those who come pre-packed with purpose or values around sustainability. Not only do customers want to buy local, they want to put money behind their values too. Let me illustrate the point through spotlighting three businesses we've been tracking at Enterprise Nation:

The Woolf's Kitchen came to our attention when founder, Dominique, pitched to Enterprise Nation's Female StartUp of the Year competition. This is an entrepreneur on a mission and I remain convinced it's a business and brand to watch. With a background career in sales and then the music industry, Dominique started to make her Thai-inspired sauces and knew she was onto something when she took her first batch to a local farmers' market and sold 250 bottles over two days. Starting locally and launching the business in April 2020, Dominique has since expanded to be stocked in delis nationwide and is selling well on Amazon in the UK – and across the globe. Her digital footprint is now driving people in-store.

Strp'ed's Ayesha Grover discovered the health benefits of the ancient root vegetable, tigernut, while working in Nigeria. She used that knowledge to create strp'd, a company providing nut, gluten and dairy-free flour and drinks. Connecting with customers across social has always been part of Ayesha's plan:

"I use Instagram and Facebook to build a community that I can regularly engage with. This involves posting content that I believe my target customer wants to see and gifting products to micro influencers to share on their own channels. I try and get creative with sampling and the most successful sampling campaign I have run has been on Sweatcoin, a platform that allows you to earn coins based on the steps you walk and use those coins to redeem products including strp'd."

Online connections are likely to lead to physical sales. When it became illegal in England to supply plastic straws, this opened a gap in the market for Maxim Gelmann, founder of pasta straw maker, Stroodles. Maxim has created "lovingly engineered, super smooth, naturally golden" pasta straws that are 100% biodegradable, remain strong for at least an hour, and are entirely flavourless. "Our entire mission as a brand is rooted in sustainability, creating eco-friendly, uncompromising alternatives to everyday items, starting with our pasta straws. We are not just another straw company – we are a movement! We're a part of a larger global effort to change the way we consume and use products."

These entrepreneurs – and thousands more like them – are keen to get back in the physical world and secure your orders. They will repay that custom through driving traffic into your stores from their large and engaged online communities, and through their clear values around sustainability and social purpose.

In return, they are likely to want prompt payment terms – a must for any small business.

> "Shoppers head to their nearest high street to once again enjoy the experience of physical retail"

PRODUCT NEWS

Take stock with our new food and drink round-up



Brand new healthy snack options from Pep & Lekker

Pep & Lekker have returned with five reinvigorated recipes that underpin Seed Snack's unique stance as a tasty, well-balanced treat.

The new recipes include: Apple & Cinnamon; Cacao & Coconut; Fennel & Chia; Cumin & Linseed and Rosemary & Hemp.

Each product in the range is a moreish baked treat that's high in fibre, low in sugar, gluten-free and free from all 14 allergens. Susan Gafsen, co-founder of Pep & Lekker, said, "Lockdown provided us with the perfect moment to fine-tune our distinct seed-based snacks and further extend our appeal; discreet tweaks that included transitioning from sunflower to olive oil, an enhanced crunch and superior on-pack design."

pepandlekker.com

Noble House Prepared releases picnic options

Premium frozen food purveyor Noble House Prepared has extended its range to include picnic essentials – perfect for the upcoming summer season.

The new range includes a frozen, ready-to-bake Jumbo Sausage Roll, ideal for a picnic or for serving for lunch or dinner for 4-6 people. The filling is made using Jimmy Butler's award-winning free-range Blythburgh sausage meat, homemade red onion jam and fresh sage.



The freshly launched Scones with Jam & Clotted Cream add a sweet option to the new range, offering frozen buttermilk scones with Rodda's clotted cream and Strawberry Jam from Rosebud Preserves.

Conrad Baker, founder of Noble House Prepared, said of the new launch, "The pandemic has created a surge of interest in summer picnics and dining al fresco. These new products will elevate any outside eating occasion, making mediocre picnics a thing of the past!"

noblehouseprepared.com

Fresh BBQ sauce for health-conscious shoppers

Just in time for barbecue season, Real Good have launched Real Good Smoked Barbecue Sauce – designed for shoppers wanting to cut down on their sugar intake without compromising on taste.

The sauce is made using 65% less sugar and salt than similar products on the market – some of which contain up to 40g of sugar per 100g – and is sweetened using 100% natural stevia leaf.

The plant-based, gluten-free recipe was inspired by American Deep South cuisine and made with authentic smoked hickory and smoked water, black strap molasses, apple cider vinegar, cinnamon, chipotle chilli and star anise – giving the sauce a tangy sweetness and mild chilli heat.

Liz Jones, founder of Real Good, said, "There's a growing demand for products that promise a low sugar content, but that are also natural and made from real ingredients. This new barbecue sauce is perfect for health-conscious consumers that care about what they are putting in their body, but still crave those little extras that make mealtimes special."

"This is a multipurpose sauce. It is designed to be enjoyed as a sauce on the side, a marinade, a dip and a cooking sauce. It's incredibly versatile and really delicious with black beans, halloumi, chicken or plant-based products."

realgoodketchup.com



Restaurant owner aged 84 launches authentic Indian chutneys

A range of chutneys has been launched by 84 year old restaurant owner, Manju Patel to satisfy the consumer demand for authentic Indian chutneys.

Having opened Brighton-based Gujarati restaurant, Manju's, in 2016, the entrepreneur has released two deliciously different chutneys with more to follow soon.

The new products – Sweet Bataku Gujarati Mango Chutney and Aromatic Mango Chutney – have been described as a completely different take on standard Indian chutneys, offering a new taste sensation for consumers.

Manju Patel said, "Opening a restaurant at 80 years of age was my dream come true. I am just as delighted and proud of our first retail range of chutneys and pickles."

manjus.co.uk





New white chocolate variant from LoveRaw

Vegan chocolate brand, LoveRaw has added to its range of confectionery items containing no dairy, no palm oil and no artificial ingredients with a white chocolate product: White Cre&m Wafer Bar.

Inspired by a popular mainstream chocolate bar, the new launch brings together LoveRaw's own branded white chocolate, hazelnut cream and wafer to create a light but satisfyingly indulgent treat.

It also supports the business's mantra 'chocolate first, vegan second'. Rimi Thapar, co-founder and CEO of LoveRaw, said, "As the world's first mainstream vegan alternative to the popular hazelnut cream filled chocolate wafer bar, our original Cre&m Wafer Bar has performed exceptionally well in the six months since it launched, making it our most successful product line to date!"

Manav Thapar, managing director of LoveRaw, said, "Having effectively emulated a leading confectionery favourite with our original Cre&m Wafer Bar, we wanted to take this even further and give our customers a brand-new product to get excited about during a time when everything else is so uncertain."

eatloveraw.com



GIVEAWAY *Highlights*

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BETTINE
Goat's Cheese Pearls & Slices

Bettine's goat's cheese was first created in 1982 on an old Dutch farm which is still used as the factory today. The way their goats are kept, the freshness of their goat's milk and the craftsmanship of their cheesemakers are all the ingredients that make their goat's cheese so mild and creamy.
bettine.nl/en



BRISTOW'S OF DEVON
Dairy Free Fudge

Tantalise your taste buds with Bristow's of Devon's new dessert-inspired dairy-free flavoured fudge. Choose from Strawberry Cheesecake, Lemon Posset or tangy Orange Delight, all of which are vegetarian and vegan-friendly. Alternatively, fall in love with their traditional fudges. Choose from three delicious flavours: Clotted Cream, Sea Salt & Caramel or decadent Chocolate Brownie.
bristowsofdevon.com



MUSHROOMS 4 LIFE
Organic Reishi Cacao Latte

Reishi, 'The Mushroom Of Immortality', is traditionally regarded as the mushroom for liver and immune health and spiritual potency. This Reishi Cacao Latte combines Reishi with cacao and creamy coconut to provide a deeply delicious, soul activating cacao warmer, providing 1g Reishi extract per serving. Suitable for vegans with no artificial ingredients and Soil Association certified 100% organic. Available in single serving sachets, great for travelling, and miron glass jars, great for the home.
mushrooms4life.com



NOBLE HOUSE PREPARED
Moroccan Spiced Harissa Lamb Tagine

Noble House Prepared represents delicious, restaurant quality, award-winning dishes that can be enjoyed in the comfort of the home. Frozen to lock in flavour, texture and nutrition, they are guaranteed to deliver a genuine gastronomic treat, like this Great Taste Award-winning Moroccan Spiced Lamb Tagine. The 'Noble House Prepared' kitchen is led by executive chef Owen Sullivan, who spent years leading Gordon Ramsay's Michelin starred restaurants.
noblehouseprepared.com



THE REAL OLIVE COMPANY
Organic La Verde Olives Wild Garlic & Basil

To create this popular blend, The Real Olive Company marinate fresh, pitted organic green Chalkidiki olives from Northern Greece with cold-pressed oil, wild garlic and plenty of basil. The result is a recipe that delights! Just tip into a bowl and enjoy or serve alongside freshly sliced tomatoes and cheese for a delicious lunch. All The Real Olive Company's olives are handpicked for their exceptional flavour and texture - bringing moments of Mediterranean sunshine.
therealolivecompany.co.uk



ILOVE SNACKS
Pistachios with Rosemary & Sea Salt

Earn your environmental stripes whilst munching on iLOVESNACKS' new range of delicious plant-based snacks in infinitely recyclable, 100% sustainable and reusable tin packaging. With Roasted Pistachios sprinkled with Rosemary & Sea Salt, Hot Chilli Corn Nuts, Roasted & Smoked Almonds and 70% Cocoa Belgian Chocolate to choose from, and palm oil-free, gluten-free, GMO-free, natural and vegan, what's not to love?
ilovesnacks.co.uk



BIRD & WILD
RSPB Coffee Fairtrade, Organic, Shade Grown, Bird Friendly Medium Roast Coffee

Bird & Wild is the RSPB's official coffee – certified Fairtrade, organic, shade grown and bird-friendly, Bird & Wild donates 6% of sales to the RSPB Charity and has donated £20,000 since 2017. The range includes medium roast, espresso roast, Swiss Water Decaf and instant coffee in various sizes. From May 2021, all coffee packaging will be 100% domestically recyclable.
birdandwild.co.uk



WOMERSLEY FOODS
Orange & Mace Vinegar

Whilst Womersley may be well known for their sublime Raspberry Vinegar, they also produce an exciting range of very versatile vinegars including this warm and citrusy Great Taste Award Winner. The flavours bring life to many recipes from Oriental stir-fries to fresh fruit and salad dishes. An essential for any kitchen, it is a perfect match for any carrot dish as well as a divine glaze on roast ham. The perfect addition to any food basket and looks beautiful on the shelf!
womersleyfoods.com

THE GREAT STOCK GIVEAWAY

SPECIALITY FOOD

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WOOLCOOL SUPERIOR INSULATED PACKAGING

GIVEAWAY *Highlights*



RIDDLE'S
Ginger Wine Essences

It's said that in Scotland in the early 1900s, Agnes Russel developed a ginger concoction much enjoyed by family and friends: Russel's Riddle. Riddle's Ginger Wine Essences, available in Smooth and Flaming Hot! varieties, are now cared for by Wendy at Wine Online. With water and sugar, each little bottle becomes a delicious homemade ginger wine. An indulgent alcohol-free tipple which everyone can enjoy anytime!

wine-on-line.com



CRAGGS & CO
Ancient Grain Flours

Family business Craggs & Co use Spelt, Rye, Emmer and Einkorn grains in their flours, which add rich flavours and nutritional goodness to bakes. Farmed, harvested and produced 100% in the UK, Craggs & Co work tirelessly to produce exceptional quality ancient grains in a sustainable manner. Currently available in 1kg retail bags (supplied in boxes of 10 x 1kg bags) are: White Spelt Flour, Wholegrain Spelt Flour and Wholegrain Rye Flour

craggsandco.co.uk



PETER'S YARD
Sourdough Bites Suffolk Cyder Vinegar & Sea Salt

Savour the crunch of these Suffolk Cyder Vinegar & Sea Salt Sourdough Bites, made using Peter's Yard's signature sourdough starter that's slowly fermented for 16 hours. Crafted from Shipton Mill flour, they're hand baked and generously seasoned with all-natural ingredients for a moreish snack which are under 100kcal per 26g serving. The baked bites have 60% less fat than regular potato crisps and are a source of fibre.

petersyard.com



THE NUTTY GROUP LTD
Apricot & Chia Seed Nutty Nibbles

Vegan, organic and gluten-free, The Nutty Group's Apricot & Chia Seed Nibbles combine two superfoods in a delicious bite sized snack. There are four energy balls inside, and they come in plastic-free, reusable and recyclable packaging as well as being organic, gluten and refined sugar-free, and suitable for customers following a vegan diet.

thenuttygroup.co.uk



THE FRESH FISH SHOP
Marinated Anchovies In Oil

Fresh fish specialists The Fresh Fish Shop's range of filleted and marinated anchovies are ready to eat and perfect served as canapés or scattered over salads. They are vacuum packed for convenience and presented in eye-catching retail packaging. Anchovies are considered a healthy dietary choice as they are low in mercury and high in omega-3 fatty acids and protein.

thefreshfishshop.com



REAL KOMBUCHA
Royal Flush

REAL Kombucha offers premium kombucha which can be served as a sparkling wine alternative fermented from exquisite loose-leaf teas. It is as delicate as a Champagne, with notes of rhubarb and white peach and is brewed from a first flush Darjeeling, the Queen of Teas. The tea is richly fragrant and creates a fermented drink that is fresh and floral. The fruit and spice flavours round out the acids to make it soft and delicate. Ideal as a celebration drink served in a Champagne flute.

realkombucha.co.uk



WAXWRAP UK BEESWAX
Organic Cotton Food Wraps and Rolls

Environmentally-friendly WaxWraps are made from organic cotton infused with a blend of beeswax, antimicrobial pine resin and antibacterial jojoba oil. The WaxWrap on a roll couldn't be easier; cut to size, cover, wash and reuse over and over. Convenient and cost effective, WaxWrap is the planet-friendly way to cover, store and contain pretty much any food or drink. Available in a choice of designs and in rolls, bags and handy pre-cut packs of wraps.

waxwrap.uk



LODGE FARM KITCHEN
Squash Curry with Coriander & Coconut

Lodge Farm Kitchen was founded in 2009 on the owners' farm in Herefordshire with the ambition to use the best British ingredients and sustainable packaging to produce the highest quality frozen meals for independent artisan retailers. Nothing has changed, other than the extent of their range and the scale of the operation. Today they are fortunate to count some of the country's finest independent food retailers among their stockists.

lodgefarmkitchen.com

GIVEAWAY *Highlights*

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WOOLCOOL SUPERIOR INSULATED PACKAGING

THE GREAT STOCK GIVEAWAY

SPECIALITY FOOD

HILLFARM OILS
Cold Pressed Rapeseed Oil



Natural, versatile and packed with vitamin E and omega 3, 6 and 9, Hillfarm's extra virgin oil has half the saturated fat of olive oil. It is made with 100% cold pressed rapeseed oil, grown and pressed on the Hillfarm farm in Suffolk, so it is fully traceable, sustainable and British. A high burn point of 220ºC makes it perfect for frying and roasting, while its wonderfully delicate and nutty flavour is ideal for dips, dressings, sauces, marinades, mash, cakes and puddings.

hillfarmoils.com

FRESH ERIC'S CAKE CO
Cherry & Almond Slice and Pear, Chocolate & Almond Slice



Introducing Fresh Eric's Cake Co's take on a classic cherry bakewell, made with morello cherries, cherry jam and frangipane. Meanwhile, their Pear, Chocolate & Almond Slice brings together pear halves baked into a hazelnut sponge and is topped with chocolate ganache. Both available in four-portion tray format.

freshericscakes.com

MAKE MINE A BUILDERS
Decaf Tea 40's



The first decaf where you can't taste what's missing. You think brilliant decaf tea happens by accident? Oh no. What actually occurs is that Make Mine A Builders' master tea blender selects only the finest hand-picked leaves from Kenya's premier tea estates and then, without the use of magic, sorcery, or mystical powers, makes the caffeine almost completely vanish. They kept the taste. They just removed the caffeine.

35foods.co.uk

ROMBOUTS ORIGINAL
Home Compostable One Cup Filter Coffees



A more sustainable 2021 is brewing with the launch of Rombouts home compostable One Cup Filter coffees – providing the answer to a greener, high-quality cup of coffee at home – without the waste, mess or fuss of other single-serve options. Available in three varieties: Original, Italian Style and Decaf, with more to follow, Rombouts home compostable coffee filters are a great way to enjoy high-quality filter coffee at home, in the office or out and about.

rombouts.com/uk

FOREST FEAST
Salted Dark Chocolate Almonds



Handcrafted in-house , these oven roasted skin-on Almonds are drenched in Real Belgian Dark Chocolate, with a sprinkling of sea salt and dusting of cocoa for a rich, intense sweet-salty experience. This vegan-friendly option is also suitable for those on a gluten-free diet. A versatile snack that pairs perfectly with a hot drink or a full-bodied glass of red wine! The range also includes two other varieties: Belgian Milk Chocolate Brazils and Cookies & Cream Almonds.

forestfeast.com

THE FUNGTIONAL BREW COMPANY
Fungtn



Fungtn is the first adaptogenic, alcohol-free craft beer range brewed with adaptogenic mushrooms – a natural solution to the stresses of our hectic modern lives, helping to keep your body in balance. The business wanted to create more mindful options for conscious consumers looking to reduce their alcohol consumption and help empower their health. They have proven that a traditional craft beer can be made without alcohol and align with those making more mindful choices.

fungtn.com

HAPPY BUTTER
Organic Grass-fed Ghee



Happy Butter Organic Ghee is made by hand in small batches in Devon from UK organic butter. Happy Butter are proudly Soil Association-certified and have won many awards, making them the UK's tastiest ghee! The ghee is tested to be free from lactose and casein and therefore can be used as a delicious alternative to butter for those with sensitivities. Its real beauty is in its high smoke point of 250° C which means it is perfect for frying and roasting, as well as making delicious Indian food.

happybutter.co.uk

EVO3 OLIVE FARMS
Extra Virgin Organic Olive Oil



Award-winning, premium, ethically sourced, and socially responsible extra virgin organic olive oil from Lesvos, Greece made using hand-picked, native olives on single-estate groves. This oil is delicate and versatile, with aromas of ripe fruit, green grass, tomato and notes of walnut. For every bottle sold, a tree is planted in a deforested area in Africa creating employment for people in these impoverished areas. Be a part of their story by making your choice count.

premiumoliveoil.co.uk

THE GREAT STOCK GIVEAWAY

SPECIALITY FOOD

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WOOLCOOL SUPERIOR INSULATED PACKAGING

GIVEAWAY *Highlights*



ORKNEY CRAFT VINEGAR
Bere Malt Vinegar

This vinegar is produced using bere barley then left to mature in Highland Park bourbon barrels, which give deep, complex flavours behind the acidity. Bere barley is an ancient grain unique to Orkney and dates back to the 8th century. All of Orkney Craft Vinegar's vinegar is raw, unpasteurised, unfiltered, living vinegar with the mother, and sustainably made using traditional methods.

orkneycraftvinegar.com



QUARTERPAST
Dark Hot Chocolate and Hibiscus Ginger & Manuka Honey Fruit Infusion

Quarterpast's Hibiscus Ginger & Manuka Honey is a beautiful floral combination, and just what you need to clear your mind and soothe your body. Meanwhile, your chocolate experience should never disappoint, and made with premium dutch cocoa, Quarterpast's thick and rich drinking chocolate will delight your taste buds and take your chocolate experience to the next level.

quarterpast.com



REAL ORGANIC FOODS
Rogan Josh Indian Cooking Sauce & Summer Fruits Conserve

An authentic and award-winning range of vibrant cooking sauces, luxury high fruit, reduced sugar conserves, gourmet specialities and delicately spicy Indian chutneys. Both richly flavoured Rogan Josh and Summer Fruits Conserve have won Great Taste Gold stars. All Real Organic products are vegetarian, most are vegan, many contain no added sugar, and they are all created with the best organic ingredients.

realorganic.co.uk



PEARL RIVER BRIDGE
Superior Gold Label Light Soy Sauce

One of the highest quality light soy sauce exported from China. Made from carefully selected soy beans and naturally brewed in sunlight then drawn from the second fermentation in the brewing process, the Superior Gold Label light soy sauce provides a mellow taste with rich sweet flavours. As Pearl River Bridge's sole distributors in the UK, SeeWoo Foods has an extensive collection of Pearl River Bridge soy sauces that will add delight to every dish.

seewoo.com



KYON DRINKS
The Ppinger - Ginger + Apple + Lime

A refreshing alternative to overly sweet, non-alcoholic drink options, The Ppinger is a lightly sparkling, all-natural beverage that packs a fiery punch. The result on the palate is complex but aromatic, leaving a lingering warmth in your throat. Even better, The Ppinger still maintains all the nutrients and goodness that ginger is famous for as a superfood.

kyondrinks.com



RADNOR HILLS
Radnor Infusions Lemon & Mint

Radnor Infusions is a sugar-free, calorie-free, and sweetener-free drink made with real British garden mint flavour and lemon extracts which is canned at source on their zero to landfill site on the family farm in Mid Wales. Radnor Hills purchases its can from another Welsh company based only 56 miles from its farm, meaning the carbon footprint on this product is very small.

radnorhills.co.uk/infusions



WELLSIDE FOODS
Hot & Spicy Vegan Burgers

Wellside Foods has a tasty solution for all vegan customers looking for a satisfying alternative to meat-based burgers this summer: Hot & Spicy Vegan Burgers. Made using a blend of vegetables, herbs and spices, they are a must-have at any party or barbecue. A family-owned business with a strong ethos around being responsible for the wellbeing of consumers, suppliers and the environment, Wellside Foods offer a delicious taste of things to come.

wellsidefoods.com



BEN'S PRETZELS
Salted Pretzels and Special Spices Pretzels

Introducing Ben's Pretzels – American-style hard sourdough pretzel pieces, hand-finished in Oxford and available in 100g bags. The range includes Salted, traditional pretzel pieces coated in salty chunks for a tasty hit; and Special Spices, pretzels coated in butter, sugar and special spices for the perfect blend of sweet, savoury and spicy. They are delicious with tea, a glass of wine, or your favourite pint.

bensprezels.co.uk

GIVEAWAY
in partnership with

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WOOLCOOL SUPERIOR INSULATED PACKAGING

THE GREAT STOCK GIVEAWAY

SPECIALITY FOOD



TAKING THE NATURAL APPROACH

Woolcool, partner of The Great Stock Giveaway, blends top-notch innovation with back-to-basics sustainable materials

Doorstep deliveries have seen an explosion of popularity over the past year as a consequence of lockdown and Covid-19. Working behind the scenes, temperature controlled packaging has played a significant role in keeping products safe and fresh while in transit.

At the same time as changing consumer habits have thrust temperature controlled packaging into the spotlight, pressure is growing on companies from every corner of the food and drink industry – producers, retailers and consumers – to meet high performance standards and shopper expectations while also delivering in terms of ecological and ethical impact.

Enter Woolcool. From its conception by founder Angela Morris back in the early 2000s, Woolcool has always held ecological principles close to heart, including the belief that natural materials can perform better than polluting and carbon-hungry man-made alternatives.

"Wool as an insulator is no exception," explains Woolcool managing director Josie Morris. "However, we have also always understood that to help spread that belief, strong scientific data would be needed to back up our product line, and that's why we have invested millions of pounds in research, partnering with academics at institutions like Cambridge University, to build evidence that wool is a better and more cost-effective insulator, regardless of its 'green' credentials," Josie says.

These credentials have won Woolcool favour with big names in the industry, like Abel & Cole, and led to its being awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise in Innovation.

Collaborating for good

For the fine food sector, delivering a memorable experience for the customer is a critical part of the job, so it is of utmost importance that produce arrives in perfect condition. With a team boasting more than 40 years of experience, there is no doubt that Woolcool has the expertise needed to advise the latest influx of enquiries about sustainable ways to deliver produce. Each partnership that Woolcool embarks on is close to its heart. In fact, the business credits its own success to its many collaborations with suppliers, partners, clients, customers and universities that share its sustainable mission. Its latest foray into innovative partnerships comes in the form of *Speciality Food*'s The Great Stock Giveaway. "The Great Stock Giveaway is a fantastic concept that fits perfectly with Woolcool's outlook in so many ways; our ethos of backing ethical and supportive business practices, connecting partners in the fine food industry with independent retailers and, of course, providing the very best temperature controlled packaging possible, which not only protects its contents, it also looks after the planet," Josie says.

"So when we heard about The Great Stock Giveaway and how it was reaching out to producers, suppliers and retailers across the fine food sector, it struck us as a fantastic example of collaboration between businesses, and an innovative way for producers to engage with stockists, and for retailers to discover exciting new lines," Josie says.

> "The Great Stock Giveaway is a fantastic concept that fits perfectly with Woolcool's outlook in so many ways"



> "Wool is naturally abundant, reusable and biodegradable"

Pushing the limits

Collaborations like The Great Stock Giveaway showcase Woolcool's simplicity as a product alongside its eco friendliness. Not only do the company's natural insulators provide superior performance, but wool liners are also flexible, which means they can be used to provide a broader range of packaging options, and they are light and small, too, meaning they take up less room and save money on supply chain costs.

And then there are the numerous green credentials of wool. "It is naturally abundant, reusable and biodegradable. We even have a 'circular economy' scheme that allows end customers to return their wool liners to us," Josie says. "Just in the last year alone, through companies choosing to switch to Woolcool's sustainable systems, we have saved the equivalent weight of 416 elephants of polystyrene from going to landfill."

Woolcool is now seeking to push these eco credentials further. "In recent years, our focus has extended beyond the environment to consider the ethical impact of our business, too. We are currently the only UK packaging business of our type to be a certified B Corp, joining a worldwide community of firms who have pledged to put social and environmental impact on the same level as profitability."

So what's on the horizon for Woolcool? "As an innovative, research-and-development-led company, we are always developing and coming up with new ideas and ways to improve our current offering. Watch this space, as we have a very exciting 12 months ahead of us!"

TEL: 01785 262030
EMAIL: sales@woolcool.com
WEB: woolcool.com/food

"Tackling package waste"



JOSIE MORRIS
MD, WOOLCOOL

Packaging plays a vital role in all areas of our life. It is protective, informative and functional. For example, it is essential in reducing food waste, tells you how many tablets to take or the nutritional value of what you are about to eat, or it delivers a vaccine at a specific temperature to remote destinations. It is true, however, that packaging waste is in the spotlight, and this needs addressing quickly.

We believe the key to reducing the impact of waste is to use the right material for the right application, and to use the right amounts of it, too. When reviewing the options, it is also important to take into account the end-of-life for each material used, so this can be relayed to the consumer.

The good news is that we have seen a positive shift over the last few years, partly through the demands made by consumers, but also because of the innovations in packaging. Woolcool is the ultimate example of this shift, by using a natural material to replace a notorious pollutant while ensuring improved performance. In temperature controlled packaging, manmade materials such as polystyrene have been clogging up landfill sites and polluting the oceans for years. Our 100% wool insulation not only out-performs it, but it is also biodegradable, recyclable, compostable, reusable and breaks down in sea water.



THE GREAT STOCK GIVEAWAY

SPECIALITY FOOD

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WOOLCOOL

SUPERIOR INSULATED PACKAGING

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THE GREAT STOCK GIVEAWAY

SPECIALITY FOOD



For full details visit: stock-giveaway.com/win

CENTRE



Welcome the warmer weather with these delicious alfresco options

1 REAL OLIVE COMPANY
OLIVES

The Real Olive Company sources all their olives from artisan and organic farmers across the Mediterranean. The olives are marinaded and packed using cold pressed oils and special herb and spice blends at an accredited site in Bristol ready for the deli fridge or loose deli counter. Live, love eat olives.

therealolivecompany.co.uk

2 DRIVERS PICKLES
SUMMER PICNIC BOX

Drivers Pickles has launched a range of gift boxes to suit all seasons. The Cheese Lover's Box will run all year round with the addition of a Summer Picnic Box and a Happy Christmas Box. All three boxes come pre-filled with a selection of their best-selling delicious pickles, relishes and chutneys. The Picnic box and the Christmas box are vegan certified.

pickle-lovers.co.uk

3 DRAGON
WELSH CHEESE

Dragon's range of award-winning cheeses are created using 100% Welsh milk from its cooperative of 130 proud dairy farmers, and incorporates the nation's classics such as Welsh Caerphilly alongside ever-popular options such as Vintage Welsh Cheddar and Mature Welsh Cheddar and Vintage Cheddar & Leek – all perfect for a picnic spread.

dragonwales.co.uk



4 BELVOIR
SUMMER DRINKS

New for summer 2021 is Belvoir's Sparkling Strawberry, Lime & Mint, made with sparkling spring water and 100% fruit juices including strawberries, lime and a hint of mint. Pair with the ever-popular Elderflower Cordial and vibrant Sparkling Pink Lady® Apple Juice which, like everything in the Belvoir range, contains absolutely no preservatives, flavourings, or artificial colours or sweeteners.
belvoirfruitfarms.co.uk

5 PETER'S YARD
SOURDOUGH BITES

Savour the crunch of these hand-baked and generously seasoned sourdough bites, made using Peter's Yard's signature sourdough starter. Available in three flavours – West Country Sour Cream & Chive, Suffolk Cyder Vinegar & Sea Salt, and Anglesey Sea Salt & Cracked Pepper – all under 100kcal per 26g serving. They contain 60% less fat than regular potato crisps and are a source of fibre.
petersyard.com

6 ORRISS & SON
HOT SAUCES

Produced in small batches to ensure maximum freshness, Orriss & Son is a deliciously punchy, specialist collection of fermented chilli sauces that are guaranteed to spice up any BBQ or picnic! The tasty lineup includes My Wave, a Piri-Piri style sauce with freshness and salinity; Fresh Tendrils, a nettle and habanero sauce with vibrant acidity; and Even Flow, a fruity and habanero-based sauce.
orrissandson.com

7 NOBLE HOUSE
JUMBO SAUSAGE ROLL

Perfect for a picnic and sure to be loved by food lovers of all ages, this gourmet sausage roll is filled with a delicious combination of Jimmy Butler's award-winning and flavour-filled Blythburgh sausage meat mixed together with homemade red onion jam and fresh sage. Delivered frozen, the enormous sausage roll is ready to bake and serves 4-6 people in generous slices!
noblehouseprepared.com

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The Life & Soul of the Pantry



CHILLI SAUCE IS HOTTING UP

It makes lips tingle and shop tills sing, says Sally-Jayne Wright, and there are plenty of tasty options to try

In 2021, the number of chilli sauces entered into the Great Taste Awards grew by 30%, year on year.

Importer MexGrocer sold double its usual quota of Valentina hot sauce in 2020. At one stage, sales of Lao Gan Ma chilli oils were up 1,900% at the online grocer Sous Chef (Guardian).

Speciality Food's editor admits to eight chilli products in her fridge which she uses for dips, marinades and shaking onto brunch. Her international haul ranges from: Tracklements Hot Chilli Sauce, through Firelli's Italian Hot Sauce, to Komathy's Kitchen pastes from Sri Lanka. She also owns the current buzz product, LGM crispy chilli oil.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE TREND?

Consumers miss exotic holidays and eating out. Plus, we Brits have always enjoyed condiments, trying everything from harissa to fiery Jamaican chutney. For novice lockdown cooks, many of whom are vegan, chilli gives even mediocre efforts a lift (sorry). On down days, chilli makes us happy.

YES, WHY DO CHILLIES MAKE US FEEL GREAT?

Capsaicin, the hot oil in chilli, binds to the pain receptor TRPV1, which our brains also use to detect temperature changes. This is why chillies make us sweat. After overstimulation, neurons stop responding and prompt the release of pain-killing endorphins, which leads to a high. This may explain the belief hot food is addictive.



WHY DO PARTS OF INDIA, AFRICA, THAILAND AND CHINA USE MORE CHILLIES IN THEIR CUISINE?

It may be down to capsaicin's anti-microbial function. Infectious diseases thrive in hot humid valleys close to the equator so an extra-spicy palate evolved to save lives.

WHICH CHILLIES ARE HOTTEST AND WHICH MILDEST?

Habaneros and Scotch bonnets top the charts for eye-watering potential while cherry peppers and Hungarian hot paprika come bottom. Tabasco sauce and jalapeno fall in the middle.

THE SEEDS CONTAIN THE HEAT, RIGHT?

They hold only about 3% of heat-giving capsaicin; the membranes have much more. To tame chillies, cut out the membranes (and thus the seeds) wearing gloves to prevent nasty surprises later on.

ARE CHILLIES HEALTHY?

Yes and no. Fresh chillies are a source of antioxidants, vitamin C, vitamin A, iron and potassium. They may assist weight loss, helping to curb appetite. The downside is that capsaicin can inflame the digestive tract so moderation is advisable.

I GREW UP EATING CHILLIES. DO YOU THINK I'VE BUILT UP A TOLERANCE?

Undoubtedly. For this feature, chef Nina Rich, who is of Sikh-Hindu descent, sampled Pico's new Naga Ghost Pepper sauce. She said, "I love it! They've roasted the spices giving it a lovely smokiness. I'd use it in anything savoury." She warned though that for anyone not used to spice, "it'll blow your head off". So know your customer.

WITH SO MANY SAUCES ON THE MARKET, HOW DO I CHOOSE?

If you prefer to buy local and British, look for award-winners. Michael Price, owner of Prices Spices in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, won two Great Taste Award stars for his Haitian Sensation sauce. Intriguingly, he also offers a zero-heat version suitable for kids called Junior Sensation.

Michael advises, "The best sauces are versatile and make the most of the flavour profile of the particular chilli used. They balance sweet and savoury." We'd add: "and have long finish, complexity and freshness."

ANY OTHER TIPS?

Look for condiments offering more than just heat. Available at Booth's, Pico's new Punjabi Ketchup recreates the flavour of butter chicken at the curry house. We tasted the new Tamarind Ketchup from The Woolf's Kitchen with salmon and loved it. In the same Thai-inspired range, there's a Jalapeno & Lime salsa and a Hot & Sour sauce. Look for more-ishness even if it's down to monosodium glutamate as in LGM crispy chilli oil. In spicy oils, texture from chopped peanuts, crispy chillies or black beans helps but monitor shelf life.

MY CUSTOMERS WON'T TOUCH SAUCES CONTAINING SUGAR, NOT EVEN DATE SYRUP. ANY SUGGESTIONS?

Launched in October, Hunter and Gather's new and versatile Unsweetened Spicy Chipotle Ketchup impresses with its clean yet spicy notes and natural sweetness from organic tomatoes.

ANY MORE HEALTHY IDEAS?

Planet Organic's buying director, Al Overton, recommends the "extra-zingy fermented sauces from London Fermentary, especially the Jalapeno with garlic, the red Smoky Chilli and the fruity Yellow Mellow. All contain gut-friendly lactic acid cultures.

"Gran Luchito's deeply authentic Mexican Chipotle Chilli Paste is endlessly popular. Biona's less well-known Coconut Aminos Sauce with Sweet Chilli is becoming so – it's a fabulously umami alternative to soya sauce, all spiciness and saltiness."

HOW CAN INDIES MAKE THE MOST OF THE TREND?

- Foodies can't resist an extra chilli sauce for the larder. So tempt them.
- Look for versatile products with recipe suggestions.
- An indication of heat level on the pack is helpful
- Colourfully packaged sauces make great gifts
- Shop the world. Your customers want to experiment.

WILL CHILLI SAUCES CONTINUE TO BE HOT, HOT, HOT?

And how! The ideal product from a marketing man's point of view is more-ish and addictive. Until we can party again like it's 2019, we'll seek our kicks in a bottle.

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MACKNADE

Speciality Food speaks to Shane Godwin, managing director of Macknade: a destination food hall like no other

Macknade is and always has been a family run business. Originally a farm, the business has diversified and the Macknade name is now synonymous with Kent's Favourite Food Halls. With two stores, one in Faversham (on the site of the original farm) and a new venture in Ashford, in the centre of the town where a cattle market once stood, Macknade stays true to its roots, showcasing Mediterranean and English produce, through its food halls and online.

WHO'S IN THE FARM SHOP TEAM?

I'm Shane Godwin, the Managing Director at Macknade and I'm lucky to head up a team of over 120 passionate, like minded people who are always striving to engage with each other, our suppliers and our customers. Our team is a wonderful blend of individuals. Some are new and others have been in the business for a substantial amount of time, but all of them truly understand what Macknade is all about.

WHAT SETS MACKNADE APART FROM OTHER INDEPENDENT RETAILERS?

Community is at our core. We not only place our customers at the heart of our decisions, but also our team, suppliers and stakeholders, all of which have key roles in enabling us to deliver spaces that bring people together over a shared love of food and drink.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF AT MACKNADE?

Without a doubt, it's our incredible team who have risen to the challenge of dealing with the global pandemic, moving swiftly to diversify or learning new skills to help out in other areas of the business whilst team members were on furlough. Everyone has really done their part to ensure that not only have we survived, but continued to be a valuable linchpin in our communities.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED RECENTLY, AND HOW HAVE YOU OVERCOME THEM?

During the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, protecting jobs for each



and every member of the team has been and will continue to be, at the heart of our decisions. Like a lot of businesses juggling and managing their teams through this time has proved challenging and it has been no different for us. Managing staff effectively across the various aspects of the business so that we can continue to deliver our strategic goals and aims has been no mean feat but we're getting there and like everyone else, we're looking forward to further restrictions being lifted so we can safely open all our spaces once again.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MACKNADE? ANY GRAND PLANS IN THE PIPELINE?

Macknade is set on a course to grow and develop in the future as we continue to seek out great opportunities that can enable us to reach and grow like minded communities, whilst we will continue to champion positive change in the supply chain.

MACKNADE THROUGH THE YEARS

1847 Frederick Neame Snr, was the first to bring the family to Faversham, Kent. The family farmed the land for many years and Macknade Farm was one of the region's leading fruit and vegetable growers, nationally renowned for its hard fruit, hops and livestock. This continued for five generations.

1947 Pears from the Macknade orchards were served at the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to the late Phillip Mountbatten.

1979 Patricia Neame (Frederick's great-great-grandaughter) opened Fir Tree P.Y.O on the corner of the family farm. Patricia does this with her husband Renato Cuomo, an Italian native – originally from the island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples.

2001 Macknade stops farming altogether and focusses solely on retail.

2011 The café opens, encouraging Macknade shoppers to sit and enjoy quality food with friends and family in-store, a community is building.

2013 Stefano, Patricia & Renato's son, becomes managing director, the sixth generation to own and run Macknade.

2016 The butchery opens, this year celebrating its fifth birthday and growing offer.

2018 Macknade opens the Deck, the outdoor dining area in Faversham.

2019 Introduction of Unpackaged at Macknade and an even greater commitment to more sustainable practices.

2020 Macknade's second store opens in Elwick Place offering 8,000sqft of retail and dining space in Ashford.

2021 Shane Godwin takes over as managing director and Stefano Cuomo becomes CEO.



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THE GREAT BRITISH BBQ

Following last summer's barbecue bonanza, another banner season for al fresco dining is on the cards. We discover how indies can capitalise on outdoor eating

As a staple in Britain's seasonal dining playbook, barbecue-ready food is always a winner for the summer months. But in 2020, thanks to consumers being stuck at home, the closure of foodservice outlets and the sunniest spring on record, the humble barbecue reached new heights. Between April and August last year, 100 million barbecue occasions were recorded, up 44% year-on-year, according to the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB). The resulting increase in spending boosted the barbecue market to £12.4 million, according to Kantar's research. Where can the beloved barbecue go from here? In 2021, the focus will turn to exploration, provenance and togetherness.

The main event

The centrepiece of any barbecue is the meaty main course, and AHDB's retail insight manager Rebecca Gladman says meat, fish and poultry volumes are expected to be elevated compared to a typical year. But even in these traditional areas, retailers can push the boat out by viewing the barbecue as an event rather than a meal. "It's really important that all retailers remind consumers of what barbecues can offer as an occasion – so a focus on treats and together time with friends and family," Rebecca says.

To this end, AHDB is launching a campaign to encourage Brits to elevate their barbecues by trying premium cuts, such as steaks, as well as moving into the joints market to create tender crowd-pleasers such as pulled pork and beef brisket through low and slow cooking.

This push for premiumisation aligns with consumer behaviour trends, wherein shoppers are keen to trade up in order to recreate the restaurant experience at home. Consumers have also shown a stronger preference for sourcing their meat locally over the past year. Recent research from Kantar found that 630,000 more households visited independent butchers in Britain in the 12 months to February 2021 and spent nearly 50% more per shopping trip on meat at butchers compared to other retailers.

Sourcing the highest quality locally reared meat for your butchery will curry favour with consumers who are looking to support British farmers. "Highlighting the provenance of barbecue products will not only meet this desire, but it can also act as a quality signal to shoppers," Rebecca adds.

It will also pay to carry varieties of meat that are off the beaten path for consumers to explore, such as K's Wors South-African-style Boerie Dogs. Another way to meet this desire for experimentation is by providing transformative spices and marinades. "We should all be thinking laterally about outdoor eating this summer," says Maria Whitehead, director of Hawkshead Relish Company. "The boring BBQ is a thing of the past. Now we are eating al fresco and pretending we are in the South of France, with family, friends, food and fun. The retail offering needs to reflect this with lots of inspiration for easy outdoor entertaining and less fiddly creations."

Spicing it up

Nothing says exciting quite like spice, and this is one trend set to get shoppers talking this year. "Things continue to hot up when it comes to barbecues. Last year's early hot weather combined with lockdown meant that we saw lots of experimentation with a definite bias to hot products," says Becky Vale

> "Barbecues give people a great reason to step outside their usual repertoire and experiment with new flavours and products"





THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

To cater to evolving taste buds, retailers must stock fine food products that go beyond the typical fare. “As we are all likely to be staying in the UK this year, I think the barbecue will evolve to be more of an outside kitchen,” says Maria. “There are lots of ways of cooking outdoors rather than just the barbecue.

“Outside pizza ovens, for example, are great for flash cooking fish, stews, flatbreads and jacket potatoes, as well as pizza of course,” she says.

Argos and John Lewis have reported pizza ovens are among the top products flying off the shelf as consumers prepare for a summer of garden parties. “Baking pizzas at home has been such a wonderful way of bringing family together over the past year,” says Karin. Classic barbecue accompaniments, such as quality olives and sauces, can be ideal for a pizza makeover. “Many of our chutneys work brilliantly on a pizza base, such as the Cheeky Chilli Salsa or even a piccalilli with cheese,” Maria says.

Home chefs who cut their teeth on banana bread and sourdough last year will be willing to experiment with cooking styles this summer. “Not only is the barbecue now a staple of the great British summer, but we have also seen a growing interest in craft fire cooking as more people are experimenting with open flame cooking and world cuisines at home, particularly Tex-Mex,” says Santa Maria’s Barny MacAdam. Karin agrees that experimentation will be on the menu: “We believe people are much more discerning when it comes to home cooking and barbecues after a year with more time spent at home, preparing food a bit slower and perhaps picking up some new cooking skills.”

of Tracklements, “which explains why our latest addition to the range, tongue tinglingly Hot Chilli Sauce, sold so well last year.”

Punchy flavours will be key on the menu this summer, alongside “versatility, exciting and thought-provoking flavours”, Becky says. “Barbecues give people a great reason to step outside their usual repertoire and experiment with new flavours and products.” But classic sauces with proven versatility will continue to be favoured staples of the barbecue arsenal. “Our stand-out hero continues to be the incredibly versatile Sweet Mustard Ketchup which consumer research tells us is used as an ingredient, a marinade and a straightforward burger relish,” she adds.

Quality sauces will also play a role in the restaurant-quality cooking trend by offering a simple way to take dishes to the next level. “A tasty sauce can bring a depth of flavour to the barbecue, adding sweetness to the charring of meat or vegetables which balances well to add layers of flavour,” says Hawkshead’s Maria.

> “The feeling of food will be paramount this summer, with mealtimes signifying a new opportunity to socialise with dearly missed friends and family”

Food to share

While barbecue mainstays such as meat and marinades will be at the top of consumers’ shopping lists, retailers shouldn’t forget about the all-important snacking platters. “The nibbles are what really set a good barbecue feast apart,” says Karin Andersson of The Real Olive Company. Here, too, there is a desire to shake up traditional flavours. “There is a growing appetite for more exotic flavours and nibbles that add a bit of oomph. For most people these days, quality olives are an essential part of the summer barbecue feast. They can really add another flavour dimension – salty, fruity, savoury umaminess which compliments summer salads, homemade pizzas and work perfectly with a cold drink al fresco style.” Here too shoppers are trading up to wow friends and family.

“As a nation, people have really raised their expectations when it comes to quality ingredients. Consumers are much more discerning when it comes to provenance of products, quality and health benefits, as well as wanting to impress with unusual flavours and beautiful packaging.”

Sharing platters filled with plenty of summer cheeses, antipasti and dips will be a big component of this summer’s garden gatherings as reunions and togetherness move to the forefront.

“The feeling of food will be paramount this summer, with mealtimes signifying a new opportunity to socialise with dearly missed friends and family,” says Marc Coloma, CEO and co-founder of plant-based meat substitute brand Heura. “Our Mediterranean culinary heritage finds its roots in the sharing of food, and our products are similarly intended to bring consumers together.”

After many months spent apart, food’s ability to bring consumers together will be a key selling point, and it’s a message that fine food independents can bring home. “If we’ve been reminded of anything over the past 12 months it’s that good food has a vital role to play in keeping up the spirits of the nation, and it’s the reason and the focus of every gathering,” Tracklements’ Becky says.

“Meeting up over food is such a natural way to bring families and friends together,” Karin adds. “When everyone brings a dish and gets involved, it can help us feel connected and part of something, which is so important after the year we’ve had.”

PLANT-BASED OPTIONS

In addition to a well-stocked butchery, growing ranks of vegan and vegetarian customers will be on the hunt for new products to try this summer. To set their selection apart, retailers can offer options with more flavour and health properties, Marc says. “Heura ‘chicken’ has the same amount of protein as animal chicken – but over 60% less saturated fat.

“With so many looking to make more sustainable choices, independents need to showcase plant-based alternatives as products that are no longer just for vegans but for people looking to reduce their meat consumption,” he continues. “21% of the population now identify as flexitarian so independents should market their vegan ranges accordingly.”

More traditional vegans and vegetarians may prefer options that don’t resemble meat. For these groups, consider looking abroad for inspiration. “The rise of Mexitarian – plant-based Mexican food – is set to be the standout trend of 2021 and for the second year running,” says Santa Maria’s Barney. For vegans, tempeh, a fermented soya bean product, offers a simple solution for the barbecue. Chunks can be marinated and stuck on a kebab or cut into strips to resemble ribs.

“Independent retailers are perfectly placed to help customers try out new products,” says Benedict Meade, founder of Tempeh Meades. “Tempeh tastes best when it has been steamed and then marinated. Independent retailers often stock some of the best sauces and marinades and could suggest some fantastic products to pair with tempeh.”

Elsewhere, classics still abound, such as salty and succulent grilled Halloumi. “In answer to the surge in demand for alternative meat choices, hot eating cheese has become a popular option and a credible ‘hero’ ingredient for many dishes; the increasing appeal of continental cheeses is apparent as consumers seek inspiration for meat-free choices or simply wish to experience more variety,” says Rocky Page, foodservice and industrial controller at Eurilait. In line with expectations that demand for these cheeses will only grow, Eurilait has expanded its range to include more choices for outdoor dining, including authentic Cypriot Halloumi Fries, Mediterranean-style baking Feta, Cheese Steaks and a Carbonara style baking Camembert, “all evoking the tastes of sunshine, and a nod to the freedom that we’ve all been longing for,” Rocky says.

STOCK CHECK



HEURA ORIGINAL CHUNKS
100% plant-based chunks with a meaty, versatile flavour.
heurafoods.com



ORRISS & SON EVEN FLOW
Fruit driven, habanero-based original recipe hot sauce.
orrissandson.com



SWEET MUSTARD KETCHUP
Made with a combination of wholegrain and smooth mustards and a measure of sugar and spices for perfect balance.
tracklements.co.uk



THE REAL OLIVE COMPANY ORGANIC LA VERDE OLIVES
Pitted green olives in cold-pressed sunflower oil and extra-virgin olive oil, with wild garlic and basil.
therealolivecompany.co.uk



COTTAGE DELIGHT GOURMET BURGER SAUCE
A blend of herbs and spices perfectly balanced with mustard, tomato, gherkin and shallots.
cottagedelight.co.uk



HAWKSHEAD BLACK GARLIC KETCHUP
Black Garlic blended with balsamic vinegar, onions and spices to make a delicious ketchup.
hawksheadrelish.com



COMMENTATORS



DAWN DAVIES
THE WHISKY EXCHANGE



STEPHANIE JORDAN
AVALLEN



DARIUS DARWELL
SIPFUL



HUGO MORRISSEY
NUISANCE



COMBIE CRYAN
ROUND CORNER BREWING



ANDY SEACH
OTTERBECK DISTILLERY



INDY ANAND
SKYLARK SPIRITS



JEN BAERNREUTHER
SPECIALITY DRINKS



HIT REFRESH

With temperatures and shoppers' excitement for socialising simultaneously rising, here's what to stock to cater for the new demand

As the temperature rises, the thirst for a delicious beverage increases too – but what do consumers want in summer 2021? After a year of on and off lockdown, it's only natural that shoppers are looking forward to getting out and about just that little bit more, socialising with friends and celebrating the apparent route out of the Covid crisis.

According to Dawn Davies, head buyer at The Whisky Exchange, the past year has given shoppers and retailers alike some time to refresh their view on the drinks they buy and sell.

"Lockdown has given the customer time to explore and learn more about the drinks world and this is fantastic. They are no longer just going for the big brands but are wanting to try different products and producers." The way customers are using products has evolved, too. "They are learning how to use products in a variety of cocktails and are not afraid to test out new drinks," explains Dawn, "and retailers can capitalise on this through giving consumers alternatives not just the classics, by looking at classic cocktails and making sure they have the ingredients needed to stock them – don't necessarily use the old favourites for these ingredients, give them a twist – and ensuring that staff are well briefed in how to suggest simple cocktails or simple serves to use up the bottles." Now that consumers have had time to educate themselves and experiment with the myriad of options out there, the opportunity is ripe for fine food and drink retailers to capitalise on this thirst for quality and story. "Customers want more knowledge, they want to understand where their products come from and what is in them," she continues. "They want to make sure they are 'drinking smart'; by this I mean that the products are produced and packaged sustainably and the companies are ethically and socially responsible."

The ethical pound

More drinks producers than ever are launching with ethical, social and environmental responsibility at their heart – a far cry from a number of larger brands which see sustainability credentials as simply a box-ticking exercise. Although Avallen is not a new product within the British market, the focus on sustainability which runs through the business is certainly a taste of things to come. Plus, the team has gone one step further and published its own sustainability-focused report – the *Bee More Report 2021* – which details its mission, successes and future plans for all to see. Co-founder Stephanie Jordan told *Speciality Food* that the natural world has always been a key focus for the business. "Here at Avallen, we have the environment in mind at every stage of development, from the choice of the apples in Normandy as our raw material, through to our lightweight bottle with apple pulp labels and our commitment to preserving wild bee populations." As well as being environmentally conscious and making business decisions in line with that, the business supports charities and endeavours all round to make the world a better place for us all. "Forget carbon neutral," she says, "Avallen is climate positive in every way; every bottle actively removes 3kg of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and we use a fraction of water in the production compared to other spirits (only 1.2L per bottle compared to 13L used on average when producing a bottle of bourbon). Plus, we donate to charitable partners with every bottle that's sold. All citizens, whether you're a 'consumer' or 'producer,' should strive to make our home a better place. And what better way to start than with enjoying a delicious tipple that doesn't give the planet a hangover? The pandemic has certainly shifted people's choices with more and more looking to purchase products that not only align with their beliefs but give them versatility in consumption. Culture is changing fast and there is a rapidly growing group of eco-conscious citizens of today who want brands to respond accordingly, and those that embrace this change are most likely to succeed in the post-pandemic world."

One of summer's most familiar sights is that of a picnic topped up with canned beverages, whether they be soft drinks, spirit-based tipples or wine. We're all familiar with their convenience factor, but what's now being better recognised is the environmental benefits they bring. Darius Darwell, co-founder of Sipful, thoroughly researched this topic before landing on cans as his drinks' format of choice. "The list of eco credentials for choosing cans is extensive but the highlights include: aluminum is infinitely and widely recyclable; glass is not!," he begins. "A 75cl glass bottle weighs roughly 600g, the equivalent volume in cans (three cans) weighs around 30g. To package 1000l of wine in a can rather than a bottle, you would save 796kg of packaging material or associated CO2 used for transport. Plus, recycling a can uses 90% less energy than recycling a glass bottle. When 1000kg of glass is recycled it will save 42kWh/ 4.5avrg UK homes per day. When 1000kg of aluminum is recycled it will save 14,000kWh/ 1,513 average UK homes per day." Marks & Spencer may be famed for it's on-the-go canned cocktails, but there's a world of options out there for discerning retailers; check out Nice Drinks and Niche Cocktails, and don't forget the craft beer opportunity.

Bring the outside in-store

As summer beckons consumers are primed to spend more time outside, and – perhaps thanks to

RETAIL INSIGHT



Natalie John, owner of Bottle Bar & Shop in Catford, shares her experience of selling drinks in this changeable period

HOW HAS COVID IMPACTED YOUR BUSINESS IN TERMS OF ON/OFF TRADE?

We saw huge support from people living locally, especially during the first lockdown. Home deliveries and the wholesale trade helped keep our business going during these tough months (year!). We reached new customers who discovered our bottled cocktails as a result of lockdown, which is great. In a way, we're very lucky that our business could be so adaptable which sadly can't be said for other types of businesses. If you're a hairdresser, you have to shut up shop in lockdown and that's that. We're looking forward to our bar being open again and chatting to locals while they sip a cocktail or two! Being open as a bar, shop and bottling facility is what it's all about for us.

HOW HAS THIS PLAYED OUT IN THE WIDER MARKET, AND DO YOU THINK SOME OF THIS CHANGE IS HERE TO STAY?

It's hard to say how comfortable customers will feel about coming back to bars after all this time but we certainly think that bottled cocktails are here to stay. Our customers seem to have truly embraced treating themselves to our delicious concoctions at home (and sending them as gifts to friends/family).

WHAT TRENDS DO YOU FORESEE APPEARING FOR THE WARMER MONTHS?

Refreshing natural tasting drinks with a low sugar content. Being good to yourself and knowing what you're drinking or eating (and how it's been made) as a consumer seems to be a growing trend. The support for local businesses, and shopping with small businesses in particular, will hopefully continue to be a big part of how consumers behave.

LOOKING PAST TRENDS, WHAT DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE IN STOCK?

You can't beat a good Old Fashioned or a Negroni. And with the warmer weather coming, we always make sure we mix and bottle plenty of our fruity cocktails. Our Margarita and Passion Fruit Daiquiri cocktails became best sellers in the spring last year.

> "With the warmer weather coming, we always make sure we mix and bottle plenty of our fruity cocktails"

HOW TO SELL

Dawn Davies, head buyer at The Whisky Exchange, shares her retail tips



Make your displays inviting – use props, dust your displays, change them regularly and don't make them too cluttered. If you can do an offer linked to the display, do so. Take inspiration about what looks good from shops that do it well – Selfridges and Fortnum & Mason, for example – but keep it simple and don't overcomplicate your designs unless you are Picasso. Often simplicity, bold colours and space make more of an impact than 100 products crammed into one space. Finally, use glassware and props to add life to your displays.

the necessity to stay close to home in recent times – they have an appreciation of the joy brought by the outside world more than ever. Foraging saw a rise during lockdown, and as a result of the upcoming warmer weather and this newfound appreciation, is well worth investing shelf space in. Hugo Morrissey, founder and director of Nuisance, started his business in order to create intriguing drinks which celebrate the countless flavours and ingredients found across the British countryside and sees a growing opportunity for all. "According to Blue Marlin's *2020 Beverage Trends Report*, 66% of consumers are now after food and drink with a natural claim – what could be more natural than foraging for your own ingredients?" he begins. "As a business, by using ingredients which are so freely available on our doorstep, we hope we can inspire consumers to open their minds to nature and embrace the ingredients all around them – experimenting with food and drink whilst feeling the positive mental and psychological effects that can come with foraging." The business started in 2020 and saw the team roaming the 6,500 acre Hopetoun House Estate in the Scottish Lowlands, foraging nettles for its drinks inspired by Hugo's mother's nettle cordial recipe. "The days of countless coffees and sitting behind spreadsheets were well and truly over," he says, "instead, fresh air provided a boost of serotonin (a hormone enabling one to feel calmer, less stressed and generally happier) whilst weeks were spent totally at one with nature."

Think beyond flavour

It comes as little surprise that shoppers tend to move away from heavier, richer beverages in the warmer months, but there's more to stocking summer drinks than stocking old favourites that stay on your shelf year-round. "Light and fresh flavours are always king around summer, with citrus-led flavours and summer fruits being the key note," says Dawn, and there are always plenty of new options to keep tastebuds excited and satisfied. For example, Round Corner Brewing has experimented with the lively citrus and tropical punch brought by New World hops. "In short, they're beautifully complementing the season with all that new world life and optimism – now needed more than ever," explains Combie Cryan, co-founder of Round Corner Brewing. The business has experimented with Kiwi hops to create a Nelson Sauvin hopped Pilsner, Mainland, with a fruitiness reminiscent of gooseberries; and 10 Hours In LA, a single-hopped West Coast IPA which boasts a tropical punch. Both perfectly tick the hot weather box.

While flavour is the key driver when it comes to summer-specific drinks, it's important to stand out from the crowd by offering options with story and heart. Plus, ignore the gin trend at your peril. "Gin is still a must-stock after all these years – it has almost become something of a staple!" says Andy Seach, sales manager at Otterbeck Distillery. "Consumers are more educated than ever, much more aware of what constitutes a genuine craft gin and constantly seeking out new and exciting brands, which is why small-batch distilling is still so on-trend." Key to the success of gin sales at fine food indies are seasonality and story, he says. "Combined with our stunning surroundings, we are encouraged to think seasonally about our range and how we bring seasonal flavours into how we serve our gins."

Indy Anand, director of Skylark Spirits, agrees that a business's footprint beyond the flavours of the products it sells plays a part. "Consumers are beginning to appreciate more than just flavour profiles," he says. "The brands' history, legacy and social impact are starting to become more important as drinkers realise they need a way to understand what is in their glass and how to understand value in what they purchase."



STOCK CHECK



AVALLEN CALVADOS
A fresh and floral calvados with notes of toffee and vanilla.
avallenspirits.com



BELVOIR SPARKLING STRAWBERRY, LIME & MINT
Made with sparkling spring water, strawberry and lime juice and mint.
belvoirfarm.co.uk



OTTERBECK DISTILLERY COTTON GIN STRAWBERRY & PINK PEPPERCORN
Made using the UK's finest strawberries and wild botanicals from the Yorkshire Dales.
otterbeckdistillery.co.uk



ROUND CORNER BREWING DROVERS
A 4.3% ABV Hazy Vermont Session IPA. Dry-hopped with juicy tropical-citrus fruit punch.
roundcornerbrewing.com



SHEPPY'S VINTAGE RESERVE CIDER
An award-winning and full-bodied cider with a medium-dry taste and a little added sparkle.
sheppyscider.com



EDINBURGH GIN POMEGRANATE & ROSE LIQUEUR
A delicately sweet liqueur, abundant with floral aroma.
edinburghgin.com



LUSCOMBE SICILIAN LEMONADE
A classic still lemonade of sharp Sicilian lemons rounded off with a splash of Madagascan vanilla.
luscombe.co.uk



WILFRED'S APERITIF
A carefully crafted blend of distilled and extracted natural botanicals, made with bitter orange, aromatic rosemary and a hint of rhubarb.
wilfredsdrinks.com



SAVYLL MOJITO
Fresh mint, sharp lime juice, and sweet rum essence evoke fond memories of sun-soaked shores of secluded Caribbean beaches.
savyll.com



NOUGHTY ALCOHOL-FREE SPARKLING CHARDONNAY
Noughty is produced with 100% organic Chardonnay grapes and de-alcoholised using a patented method.
thomsonandscott.com

COMMENTATORS



WILL COWLING
FMCG GURUS



MATT HODGETTS
PETER'S YARD



ZOE OATES
THE HONEST BEAN



LUCINDA CLAY
MUNCHY SEEDS



FRANCESCO MAJNO
SMALL GIANTS



HAYLEY MURGETT
ECOTONE UK



JULIAN CAMPBELL
FUNKY NUT CO



BRONAGH CLARKE
FOREST FEAST



5 MUST-KNOW SNACK TRENDS

From mindful snacking to the return of on-the-go eating, *Speciality Food* discovers the latest products and formats to shake up the sector

Over the past year, snacks have taken on a new significance for consumers. What were once simple indulgences became sources of much-needed comfort and security during a troubling and uncertain time. Snacks also played a role in breaking up the day for those working from home. One October 2020 survey of US consumers by The Hartman Group found that distraction played a role in a whopping 40% of snacking occasions, while 43% of respondents said they snacked to cope with boredom or frustration.

These changing habits have ignited the development of new products and created novel stocking opportunities for retailers. As Britain's lockdown measures ease, it's time to take a fresh look at the latest trends in snacking to discover the products that will pack a punch in the months to come.

Healthy snacking

"Over the past 12 months Covid-19 has significantly changed how consumers go about their day-to-day lives," says FMCG Gurus marketing manager Will Cowling. And while this initially led to a craving for traditional sweet and salty snacks, a growing health-consciousness is taking root, reshaping consumers' priorities. "FMCG Gurus research shows that in February 2021, 63% of consumers stated that the virus has made them more conscious about their overall health," Will says. "Although the peak of the virus has passed, the concern has risen by 4% from July in 2020. This shows that consumers are re-evaluating their attitudes to health and wellness and questioning what issues beyond the virus could be impacting their overall health, such as current diets and lifestyles and the health risks these pose later in life."

But the latest health kick doesn't translate to less snacking. Will explains, "Although consumers are stating they are planning on eating and drinking more healthily, 55% of UK consumers state they have snacked more frequently in the last month." This means a healthy makeover is in order for retailers' snacking aisles.

Matt Hodgetts, speciality and foodservice manager at Peter's Yard, agrees that healthy snacks will see a boost in innovation, helped by changing government regulations. "The National Food Strategy due in July 2021 and the impact on HFSS [high fat, salt and sugar food and drink] regulations will result in lots of innovation in the category," Matt says. Indeed, new brands are making the most of this convergence of government regulations and consumer habits with new launches, such as Good & Honest's popped veggie crisps, Pep & Lekker's seed snacks the Mindful Snacker's new Simply Roasted range of healthier crisps. "Changes in regulations may give secondary space and advertising space to brands whose products comply with the regulations," Matt says. "This is a fantastic opportunity for better-for-you brands and brings more competition to the market which will give consumers a better selection."

Functional ingredients

The push for healthier snacking will also be a call to arms for transparency, with brands that make their ingredients and health claims clear pulling into the lead. "Especially with increased awareness of links between Covid-19 and other underlying health issues, consumers are becoming more aware of what exactly is going into their food," says Zoe Oates, director at The Honest Bean, which makes fava bean snacks and dips. "This is where brands like The Honest Bean succeed, as it is transparent about what goes into its products, with a minimal ingredient list. They're also brimming with B-vitamins and high in potassium, magnesium and iron."

Snacks that have tangible benefits for consumers, such as boosting energy levels or immunity, will be of particular interest. "Consumers are turning to functional snacking options such as high protein bars and typical sports nutrition snacks, highlighting that a proportion of consumers are moving away from traditional snacking products and looking to healthier alternatives," FMCG Gurus' Will says. "Protein has been a growing trend for the last couple of years, with around half of all UK consumers seeking to add extra protein to their diets," Zoe adds.

Lucinda Clay, co-founder of Munchy Seeds, has also noticed a big shift towards snack solutions that "give the satisfaction and great taste consumers love, along with quality, natural ingredients, that also nourish and boost energy". She continues, "Our seeds fit this consumer demand perfectly, because you can snack on something savoury or sweet whilst enjoying a good dose of protein, fibre and omega 3. A win-win for today's snackers."

Sustainable innovations

While health-giving snacks have seen a clear Covid boost, they aren't the only products consumers are reaching for. As ever, there is also a focus on products with a limited impact on the environment and which make the most of locally sourced ingredients.

Traditionally, consumers focused on plant-based options or products with sustainable packaging when seeking out eco-friendly foods. Now, savvy shoppers go even further. "Consumers are no longer just looking at plant-based options, they're now conscious about the whole supply chain," says Zoe. "Some foods, such as avocados and almonds, are known for putting a strain on the environment and depleting water resources, making them unsustainable to grow and import." With conscious consumerism on the rise, it's no surprise that consumers are beginning to focus on products that use sustainable ingredients. Fava beans, for instance, are grown in the UK, are eco-friendly to farm and offer an alternative to other pulses such as chickpeas which tend to be grown in the Middle East before being transported to the UK to make products including houmous. "Fava beans also fix nitrogen, improving soil health and reducing the need for nitrogen-based fertilisers," Zoe says.

With eagle-eyed shoppers searching for the most sustainable products on the shelves, stocking more sustainable, left-field options could find you a crowd pleaser. Take Small Giants, for example. The brand uses insect powder in its snacks to offer a more sustainable alternative to other proteins. "We are witnessing an epochal transition from traditional meat-based proteins to a wider range of alternatives. This is happening because people are increasingly aware of the devastating impact of traditional proteins," says Francesco Majno of Small Giants. "I personally believe that we should be forward-looking, aiming towards game-changer solutions that, although more complex, could bring greater benefits to future generations. "Insects are among the most promising alternatives, offering huge benefits both in terms of nutritional values and sustainability," he says.

The return of on-the-go formats

With lockdown restrictions easing, brands are once again prioritising the development of grab-and-go products. "Healthy, on-the-go snacking, is undoubtedly a growing

> "There will be more focus than ever on healthy snacking, with people continuing habits practised under lockdown"

BRAND INSIGHT



Matt Hodgetts of Peter's Yard advises retailers to consider the positioning of snacks for maximum impact

For retailers, when stocking a product range, work with the supplier to select a range that delivers the most impact on the shelf. Ask the brand for advice on their best-selling lines. Merchandising in-store is also key – in our experience positioning Peter's Yard next to the cheese counter certainly increases sales, as crackers become an 'impulse' purchase to pair with the cheese, rather than a storecupboard purchase, where consumers are more considered on price.

market ripe with innovation," says Julian Campbell, founder of Funky Nut Co. The brand has launched a plant-based, peanut-butter-filled pretzel snack to tie in with the vegan and health trends, and its resealable pack makes it ideal for catering to consumers who will once again be snacking while out and about.

Healthy snack brand Kallø is also making a move back to on-the-go eating after a change in habits during lockdown. "Demand increased for Kallø's jumbo packs of rice and corn cakes during the pandemic, and as lockdown lifts, we're turning our attention to smaller pack formats to meet the needs of consumers on the move," says Hayley Murgett, Kallø brand controller at Ecotone UK. "With rice cakes consumed on 1.8 occasions per week and 22.3% of these occasions being 'carried out' of home, Kallø is extending its much-loved chocolate and yogurt topped range into an on-the-go twin pack format," Hayley says.

Moments of joy

Although demand for healthy snacks is evidently growing, consumers are still looking to indulge while they snack. "FMCG Gurus' insights show that products such as potato chips, chocolate and biscuits have increased since July 2020," Will says. "This suggests that there is a slight attitude vs behaviour gap as consumers are not willing to cut out products which they associate with moments of indulgence and comfort in times of uncertainty."

The sweet spot will be snacks that blend quality ingredients and healthy credentials with flavours that provide a source of joy. "One of the biggest trends for 2021 is the clean treat trend, where consumers look for permissible treats," says Bronagh Clarke, marketing director of Forest Feast. "Something healthy with an indulgent twist." The brand recently launched a new Signature Chocolate Nut range, which Bronagh says, "brings something different to the confectionery category for consumers by reconciling the goodness of nuts with the indulgence of Belgian chocolate". She continues, "Even as we slowly ease out of lockdown, the Big Night In will still be relevant to many consumers who may be reticent to return to crowded pubs and restaurants. These consumers will still need and want to treat themselves. Whether it is slow roasted and seasoned nuts, such as our Sea Salt & Cracked Black Pepper Nut Mix or something sweeter like Belgian Milk Chocolate Brazil Nuts, Forest Feast handcrafted and deliciously distinctive snacks will appeal to everyone."

Peter's Yard has also played into this trend. During the Covid pandemic, it saw a "significant uplift" in sales in the speciality retail sector, offsetting a fall in foodservice. "With the absence of restaurant trade, consumers have chosen to treat themselves at home and have discovered new speciality products." With consumers already convinced of the benefits of speciality snacks, it's up to retailers to stock the right products to satisfy demand.

> "With the absence of restaurant trade, consumers have chosen to treat themselves at home and have discovered new speciality products"

STOCK CHECK



PETER'S YARD ORIGINAL SOURDOUGH CRACKERS
Made in small batches with a signature sourdough starter, which slowly ferments for 16 hours.
petersyard.com



PEP & LEKKER ROSEMARY & HEMP SEED
Gut-friendly, gluten-free baked snacks with full-bodied flavours and nutritious seeds.
pepandlekker.com



MUNCHY SEEDS SUPER BERRY
Lightly toasted seeds with chia, blueberries, cranberries and goji berries.
munchyseeds.co.uk



SMALL GIANTS TURMERIC & PAPRIKA
Irresistible, crunchy crackers made with cricket powder.
eatsmallgiants.com



KALLLØ BEETROOT VEGGIE CAKES
Plant-based lentil and pea cakes with a beetroot and balsamic flavour seasoning.
kallo.com



FUNKY NUT CO PEANUT BUTTER FILLED PRETZELS
Oven-baked and generously filled with the brand's creamy signature blend and dusted off with sea salt
funkynutco.com





STORECUPBOARD STAPLES

Options abound, but how can independents set themselves apart from the mainstream when it comes to oils, dressings and vinegars?



COMMENTATORS



KIM MATTHEWS
EDIBLE OILS



HOLLY SANDS
SOUS CHEF



TARA CHICHARRO
PICUALIA



TOM LAKI
HONEST TOIL



WILLIAM UDEN
AEITHALIS

Staple products they may be, but oils, vinegars and dressings offer a prime opportunity for independent retailers to offer something different and become a destination for curious home cooks – new and seasoned alike.

"Speciality retailers should look to stock a range of oils which cater to home cooks looking for inspiration, education and support with their oil choices," begins Kim Matthews, commercial director for Edible Oils Limited. "Over the last couple of years, and especially since the start of the pandemic, we have seen consumer interest and engagement with oils soar."

Education is a key driver of this sector's success, he continues. "With research showing that over half of British cooks find oils confusing, we've also seen the need from consumers for help on education to help make the right choice of oil for the right dish or occasion. As a result of these trends, shoppers are experimenting more with different types of oil and spending more in the process."

Olive oil may be a stalwart of the fine food independent's shelves, but that's not to say that there's nothing left to explore. "It may not sound adventurous, but our range is sourced to reflect the hugely varied characteristics of different regions and olive varieties," says Holly Sands, buyer at Sous Chef. "When you compare the intense, fiery flavour of Coratina olives from Puglia in our Muraglia oil to the mellow, rich warmth of the Grand Brahis Noir, made with black olives from Provence, you get a sense of the stark contrast and variety that's out there."

Ticking the health box

With today's shopper more interested in the health credentials of what they consume than ever before, it's worth promoting the natural benefits of quality olive oil. "It's important to understand that not all olive oil is created equally. The choices that you find on the supermarket shelves are often over-processed refined 'blends' resulting in lower oleic acid, reduced polyphenol content and a bland, flat taste," explains Tara Chicharro, co-director of Picualia. "High in monounsaturated fat, olive oil is perhaps most renowned for its heart health benefits, but there is much more to olive oil than cardio-protective properties.

"Oleic acid acts as an antioxidant and has been shown to increase absorption of vitamins A, D, E and K," she continues. "Growing evidence also suggests that polyphenols in olives not only enhance the oil's flavour profile, they are shown to promote protection against a range of diseases through their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties."

> "I think it's becoming more common to think of dressings outside of salads – and what is a salad anyway?"

The credibility question

Tom Laki, co-founder of Honest Toil, thinks the fine food retailer's route to quality olive oils should go relatively unchallenged from mainstream shops. "I think the nature of supermarkets is always going to rely on small margins, buying in volume, and squeezing suppliers," he explains. "Consequently they'll inevitably work with big-industry; there's just no way this model can work with low-intervention, small-scale producers.

"There'll always be attempts for supermarket brands to mimic smaller businesses whose provenance has credibility," he says, continuing that he is, "always optimistic about people's conscience driving support for independent business. As long as affordability doesn't stand in the way, I think we're moving in this direction."

William Uden, founding partner of Aeithalis, agrees. "Food chain transparency is going to become more and more important in the future and companies that can embrace it now and build that level of trust with their customers will flourish." A pioneer in the UK's refill EVOO market, Aeithalis operates as transparently as possible – sharing its values on social media in order to spread the good word. "We post videos of our grove and regularly out myths and mistruths on olive oil production on social media. We've found that there is a huge market for olive oil that people can feel positive about buying, not just for its taste but for our values."

Rupert Parsons, managing director of Womersley Foods agrees that there's a stark contrast between supermarkets and independents when it comes to oils, vinegars and dressings. "There is a big difference in the habits of the supermarket shopper, who will often have a list of regular items to tick, and the fine food emporium visitor who will often be looking for esoteric ingredients," he explains. "For the latter, those finds will be either for a specific recipe or an inspired 'find'. Our experience over the years is that it is the owners and staff who make the difference here, acting as our 'ambassadors' and proudly introducing their shoppers to the stock items they love themselves as well as finding ingredient solutions for them.

Think outside the box

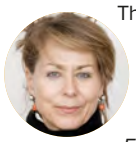
Holly recommends thinking internationally when stocking your oils, vinegars and dressings shelf. "For us it's about recognising the different usages across cuisines – from using a Provence tarragon vinegar to pep up a plate of oysters, to adding Chinkiang vinegar to a Chinese pork dish for smoky, complex acidity." And, as ever, versatility sells. "I think it's becoming more common to think of dressings outside of salads – and what is a salad anyway?," says Holly. "Our vinegars can be part of so many dishes, so they are an excellent way of increasing a basket size with something the shopper will get 101 uses from – now that really is great value," says Rupert.

With health and ethical credentials experiencing real consumer appetite, what should indies look for to truly modernise their range? "I think people will be looking for that next punchy flavour hit, that transforms the profile of a dish," says Sous Chef's Holly.

> There is a big difference in the habits of the supermarket shopper, who will often have a list of regular items to tick, and the fine food emporium visitor who will often be looking for esoteric ingredients

BEHIND THE SCENES

Peri Eagleton, co-founder of Seggiano, explains what to look out for when stocking up on oils



There's no shortage of exposés on the subject. A book called *Extra Virginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil* describes it as having always been a favourite of fraudsters, who take advantage of consumers' unfamiliarity with genuine EVOO to sell dubious blends in its stead. An estimated 80 per cent of Italian olive oil on the market today is fake.

THE RUN OF THE MILL
One would hope certifications like PDO and IGP would be sufficient guarantee, but scandals still occur. Major Tuscan mills in our vicinity went under investigation some years ago when DNA from greek olive cultivars was found in an IGP Tuscan oil. Look for oils from smaller geographical areas and specialised mills and producers when sourcing.

TO BLEND OR NOT TO BLEND?
Some of the best EVOO in the world uses more than one olive variety, while some are monocultivar. It's a great sign if a label lists the cultivar/s used because it signals provenance and a level of production detail absent from generic industrial blends.

THE TASTE TEST
Whether delicate, medium fruttato or fruttato intenso, it should have a balanced aroma and flavour and the presence of some bitterness and pepperiness. These flavours are a direct expression of the antioxidative polyphenols present in the oil, those magical properties that make extra virgin both delicious and healthy. They deteriorate over time if an oil contains defects or is subject to prolonged heat and light, so always buy oil in dark bottles and display them in a cool area.

LOVE IS BLIND
Colour is not an indicator of quality. We're so conditioned to judge by visual cues that tasting panels use dark glass cups.

OTHER BUZZWORDS
Filtering removes microparticles of vegetable matter and water that trigger deterioration in EVOO.

We're currently developing a high-antioxidant EVOO, naturally high in Vitamin E, by using innovative milling methods and select cultivars. It will be on the market by Christmas.



HOW TO CREATE A CHEESE DESTINATION

Attract locals and visitors to your artisan cheese offering by transforming it into a must-visit location

The easing of lockdown rules has not only been news to the ears of non-essential retailers. Even cheesemongers and delis that have been lucky enough to remain open have reason to celebrate. A good farmhouse cheese retailer is no ordinary shop – it's a foodie destination, and the end of tight restrictions on movement around the UK means that mongers can once again call visitors from all corners of Britain to their doors. So whether you sell cheese at a small counter in a bustling deli, at a farmer's market stall or a dedicated shop, read on for advice for transforming your offering into a haven for cheese lovers.

An evolving range

What does a 'cheese destination' look like? For Kevin Sheridan of Sheridans Cheesemongers, it is all about creating a comfortable environment, and then letting your cheese do the talking. Your shop should be "a beautiful place to be in, and the easiest way to do that is to allow the products to form the atmosphere and dominate the visuals," he explains. "Most importantly, we want to create a space in which people are comfortable, and where there are as few barriers as possible. It is so important that the space should be welcoming to people who are not familiar with artisan cheeses and foods," Kevin says.

Indeed, as well as showcasing your best cheeses by setting as many out on display as you can, it is also important to consider your signage and product range, ensuring there's an easy entrypoint for the supermarket crowd. "We keep a strong core of regular products which people grow to love and know well," Kevin adds. "It is important to have a strong local range, but also people like the rare and the exotic. It is all about balance."

"The range is key," agrees Owen Wyn Davies of Tŷ Caws, which sells fine cheeses across Cardiff farmers' markets. Cheesemongers should consider placing go-to cheeses front and centre alongside a rolling display of the more unusual varieties. "It is important to have a halo of new and occasional products to keep the customers interested and surprised," Kevin says.

Regularly introducing new cheeses, even if only for a short period of time, keeps customers engaged, even if the cheese of the day doesn't appeal to them, Owen says. "It just ensures that they are aware that there are other new cheeses out there, and that it's not just the same – every week, it will evolve and adapt."

Communicate and educate

While a well-chosen cheese selection will do much of the talking, cheesemongers still have a critical role to play in turning their establishment into a must-visit destination. "As cheesemongers, we are the link between the customer and the producer," Kevin explains. "It is our job to strengthen the connection our customers experience with the producers and the places from which their foods come."

This includes translating the stories of cheesemakers to customers, and helping them understand the impact that place and tradition has on different cheese varieties. "We must work to help customers understand the nature of artisan foods, its inconsistencies and the benefits of the variances we see from season to season and often batch to batch. We often need to challenge them in their choices and encourage them to explore new products and flavours," Kevin continues.

The customer experience

Owen agrees that conversations with customers can be the difference between a cheese shop and a cheese destination – especially with newly lockdown-free consumers keen to enjoy the experience of shopping in person. "It's the rapport that you give your customers. Especially now, people have a little bit more time on their hands, perhaps, and they're wanting that customer experience. A lot of shopping has been done online, but one of the things about cheese is that it always strikes up a conversation."

Although Owen has spent much of his cheese career in the background, over the past year he's had more experience selling cheese directly. "It always amazes me the enthusiasm for cheese. People have a genuine love for cheese. Having that kind of interaction directly with your customers and getting to know them and their family, I think that's why the farmers' markets, particularly in Cardiff, are doing really well. Because it's a relaxed environment where people can have a chat and have an interaction."

> "As cheesemongers, we are the link between the customer and the producer. It is our job to strengthen the connection our customers experience with the producers and the places from which their foods come"

These conversations can be used, as Kevin says, to educate customers, build trust and encourage them out of their comfort zone, leading consumers to a wider appreciation of artisan cheeses. "Often customers are willing to trust us and say 'yes we'll give this a go this week'," Owen says. Cheese destinations are built, he says, on "expanding customers' knowledge and their discovery of British cheese. I think that's one thing that we, as small independent retailers, can achieve."



Seasonal batch of St James released

The Lake District-based cheesemakers behind artisan farmhouse cheese St James have launched a new seasonal batch of their multi-award-winning product. Martin Gott and Nicola Robinson have created a truly unique cheese by combining the milk from their flock of Lacaune sheep with a home-grown bacterial culture.

The non-intensive farming method combined with the careful maturation of the cheese create a product that is strongly influenced by seasonality, and as a result the cheese's flavour profile can vary from a deep and punchy to a distinct milky freshness. "We milk and make cheese seven days a week from February until October, so life is pretty full on now, but we're in this to create cheese for people to enjoy," says Martin.

"There's nothing better than seeing a store full of cheeses you've created at the start of the making season, but equally I love seeing it empty at the end. It indicates we've done our job and made cheese that people have wanted to buy and have enjoyed, and that makes me happy."



NEWS IN BRIEF

VEGAN CHEESEMAKER TARGETING EXPORTS

Sheese, the UK's fastest-growing plant-based cheese brand, has notched market growth of 75% as demand grows for plant-based dairy products. Bute Island Foods' dairy free brand is now available across Europe, North America, Asia and Oceania. Debbie Dawson, managing director of Bute Island Foods, told *The Scotsman*: "As more and more consumers look to reduce their dairy intake for health or environmental reasons and increase plants into their diets, the popularity of dairy free cheese has been growing apace – and not just in the UK but across the globe. As a business that produces only dairy free cheese and dairy free ice cream here on the Isle of Bute, this has presented us with a huge opportunity and one we have been able to seize upon."

CROWDFUNDER TO BRING FRENCH CHEESE IMPORTS TO GLASGOW

A crowdfunder has been launched to fund the "first French grocery shop in Glasgow". Set up by a French native living in Scotland and a Scottish Francophile, the shop will provide daily French grocery products, including fromagerie, charcuterie and boulangerie. "We want to bring a wee bit of France to Scotland," the founders said.

PLANT-BASED PRODUCT **SALES** ARE **PROJECTED** TO **RISE** FROM **€3 BILLION** TO **€5 BILLION** BY **2025**, BUT WILL MAKE UP JUST **4.1%** OF **DAIRY** SALES

SOURCE: ING RESEARCH



New look for Hampshire Cheese Company range

Herriard-based artisan cheese business Hampshire Cheese Company has refreshed the branding for its Tunworth and Winslade cheeses with a view to bringing the brand more up to date.

The brand new look was designed to give Tunworth, a British Camembert, and Winslade, a Vacherin-Camembert cross, a greater appeal to a wider audience and improve brand recognition.

Founder Stacey Hedges says the team is very proud of producing something that people love eating. "We have developed our business over the last 16 years and have a hugely talented team of cheesemakers. I'm proud to unveil our new and more modern look, which we hope will increase our brand recognition and open up the Hampshire Cheese Company to new audiences across the UK."

Halloumi to receive PDO

The traditional Cypriot cheese Halloumi is set to receive protected designation of origin (PDO) status in the European Union. According to Cyprus' agriculture ministry, the new protections will come into effect from October.

The production of Halloumi, the second-most valuable export from Cyprus, has grown as an industry between 20% and 22% annually for the past five years. The news means that the much-loved cheese joins a long list of European cheeses that have received protected status, including France's Comté, Italy's Gorgonzola and British favourites such as Blue Stilton, Yorkshire Wensleydale and Single Gloucester.

After the news was announced, Cypriot president Nicos Anastasiades said in a tweet, "A shield of protection is now in place. Significant prospects for increasing exports of our national product, to the benefit of all Cypriot producers, Greek and Turkish." The agriculture ministry has plans to start breaking into the Chinese market.



China poised to be key cheese export market

Cheese is growing in popularity across Asia, and in China, recent research from GlobalData predicts that the value of the cheese market will rocket by millions over the next four years to reach nearly $2bn by the year 2025.

The explosion in the growth of the cheese market comes as more Chinese consumers view cheese as a nutritious food for snacking. "Dairy products are considered a healthy and essential food in China," says Lihong Zheng, innovation researcher at GlobalData. The group's research shows that 32% of consumers in China are increasing their dairy intake "as much as possible", and 47% are trying to consume a "moderate" amount of cheese.

The most popular cheese products are those targeted at children. "One of the reasons for this is that the younger generation, those born in the 80s and 90s, are becoming parents and look for more nutritious offerings for their children."

China's average cheese consumption is still relatively low, Lihong says, "especially compared to neighboring countries like Japan and South Korea. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Japan's cheese consumption per capita is 2.35kg, while China is lagging at 0.30kg. "GlobalData's research suggests similar findings, in which historically, Japan has led in value-terms of cheese consumption; however, in the past few years demand has skyrocketed in China, with the forecast growth expected to quickly accelerate, largely due to the possible health benefits associated with cheese consumption."

EU considers ban on 'dairy alternative' labels

European Union negotiators are discussing plans for a ban on marketing plant-based products as 'dairy alternatives', putting them up against some of the largest consumer goods companies on the continent.

Reuters reported that the draft legislation gained the support of the European parliament in October, with 54% in favour of the ban, although in the same voting round they overturned a proposed ban on the term 'veggie burger'.

The ban would see plant-based food and drink described as an 'alternative' to dairy products outlawed, and lawyers said even packaging design, such as plant-based milk packaging that resembles milk cartons, could come under fire.

Danone, Nestlé and Unilever have protested the ban, and Siska Pottie, head of the European Alliance for Plant-Based Foods, told Reuters, "It would be almost impossible to communicate about plant-based products. Saying a product had half the carbon emission of butter could be forbidden. Even 'lactose-free' might not be allowed... it's madness." The potential ban needs approval from member states and parliament.

CHEESE FACT FILE...

SNOWDONIA CHEESE **BLACK BOMBER**

- **Country of origin:** UK
- **Milk:** Cow's
- **Region:** Wales
- **Description:** Extra Mature Cheddar loved for its immense depth of flavour and smooth creamy texture.



> "You've got to really love cheese to have a successful cheese business. You've got to be obsessed with cheese, otherwise don't bother, because it's not easy. I've been selling cheese for 15 years now, and I'm still excited about it. When times are hard, like when the virus broke out, if you're not passionate about what you do then you're not going to be able to muster up the survival instinct to push through"
>
> **GEMMA WILLIAMS, THE LITTLE CHEESEMONGER**

"Knowledge is key to success"



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

As a restaurateur and delicatessen owner I have been around fine food, great cheese and wine for most of my working life. In 2017 Mary Quicke's brainchild, The Academy of Cheese was founded, thank goodness. My passion has always been cheese, and the opportunity to expand my knowledge with an accreditation made perfect sense.

There are all sorts of thoughts that spring to mind when you hear the word "salesperson". For me it suggests someone selling to make money – well indeed that is exactly what it is. However to be an honest salesperson (yes there is such a person) then knowledge is key along with an excellent product.

The best delis and cheesemongers have well informed staff that naturally upsell produce. Upselling is not only needed to increase margins but additionally it helps to bring awareness to the exceptional produce available on our doorsteps. Staff training and briefings are vital to help inspire your team and further, promote new cheese selections. As a training partner of the AoC I have been able to train all of my team and without doubt it has benefited.

Five to 10 minutes before you open the doors for business is all it takes to inform your team about certain cheeses, their make, post makes etc. We talk about promotions and any planning that may be needed for the day.The idea of holding briefings is nothing new and you will generally find that all the best establishments have a briefing every morning.

The product knowledge that my staff have is key to our successful sales. Customers need to feel that the person selling is confident about their product. They feel reassured and are happy to take informed recommendations by our cheesemongers.

Much like sommeliers, cheesemongers are finally being recognised for their skills and wealth of knowledge. Now that there are accredited courses (just like sommeliers) this profession is set to grow and it is now vital that your cheese shop, deli etc has a team of proficient cheesemongers. This will only help to boost your businesses positive profile and sales.

Most importantly knowledge is key to helping support cheesemakers. I have converted so many people to artisan over the years through my knowledge of cheese and how it is made. The AoC has finally brought something to the table that was missing, a condiment that brings out the true flavour and characters of our cheeses. The customer experience journey begins with the salesperson that is now (or soon to be) a professional cheesemonger.

Throughout this awful pandemic the one thing that I and many other retailers and cheesemakers are sure of is that the public have been able to see food for what it really is. There is a common realisation that mass produced is generally inferior to small production. Faceless produce has a limited time on the shelves. People now really want to know who made their food, where it comes from and how it is made. In the artisan food and wine business it is our duty to continue to promote those small and passionate producers. Small medium enterprises are the backbone of our society's workforce; industrialists have had their time. Why fund the lifestyles of the CEOs and help pay for their third homes?





FINAL CALL

Spring is finally not just on our doorsteps, but in full swing. The seeds that I sowed at the end of March in the makeshift propagator in my spare-room-turned-working-from-home-office-space have sprouted, promising the tomatoes, peppers, courgettes and cauliflower that are to come later in the year (gardening skills pending). It's a natural process, and one I'm entirely familiar with, and yet the resilience of British springtime took me off guard this year – especially following the tough winter we all spent in lockdown.

There is much talk about business resilience today. With traditional retail giants like Debenhams and Topshop crashing down, it is little wonder. It has me thinking – what does resilience look like for fine food independents? Is it shiny new websites and shelves stocked with the latest trendy product lines? Or is it more to do with the relationships built with suppliers, customers and staff? Likely, it is an alchemical mix of all of the above.

Blending all of these ideas together results in another trending topic from the world of business today: the omnichannel offering. Yet, jargon aside, establishing this fine balance between e-commerce and physical shops is something that many in our sector have mastered over the past 12 months.

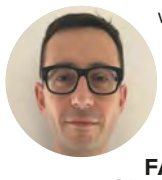
The coming months will be revelatory in terms of the staying power of e-commerce and the future of bricks and mortar. While experts insist online shopping is here to stay, for our sector, to what degree will vary. Fine tuning this balance is something that cannot be done without a deep understanding of your customer base – who shops with you, how and why? What do they get out of shopping in your store versus on your website? Are they digitally savvy? How driven are they by convenience versus experience?

These will be important questions to ask as we continue to witness the opening of the economy, a return of confidence among consumers and the fluctuations between online and in-store shopping. I'd encourage you to use this moment of in-between to be open with your customers – they're the keys to this puzzle after all, so while you're recommending which chutney to serve with which cheese, ask them for their views on online versus physical shopping. You never know where that conversation will lead you, but I'm sure it will be valuable.

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

5 MINUTES WITH...

RICHARD SAGER, UK GENERAL MANAGER OF NIO COCKTAILS



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
My dream was to be a commercial pilot... but if you're asking me for right now at my age, it would be something involved in the health and fitness sector.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
When I was 15, I washed cars at the local Honda dealership; that quickly led to delivering new cars a couple of years later, which at the time was a brilliant job.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Anyone with a can-do attitude, no matter the circumstances.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
Washing cars at the local Honda dealership on a hot day. I had to wear overalls and be in an enclosed space – basically the most humid conditions you could imagine!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
Literally every day we do something new and move the brand and proposition forward by listening to our patrons; they are such a brilliant source of information and ideas.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
Everything and anything related to invoices.

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
There's so much rapid innovation of product and proposition that is brilliantly aligned to changing lifestyles and habits. It's fun to watch the evolution.

TEA OR COFFEE?
Coffee.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
That's the most morbid question I've ever been asked in an interview... but you've asked. Chicken soup, medium-rare Tomahawk steak with mashed potatoes and peas, chocolate fondant for desert. Penicillin cocktail beforehand, red wine during and peated Scotch after.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
If it were easy, everyone would do it. Put another way, just because it's hard isn't a reason to not do something!

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
Cottage cheese – it's just wrong.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
Fermat's Last Theorem by Simon Singh. At its heart, it's a love story of maths.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Sweet, right up to the point that I've had too much and then need savoury to counteract...





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TRIED & TESTED



ROUND CORNER 10 HOURS IN LA

While non-alcoholic drinks and light, bubbly seltzers abound at the moment, sometimes all you want is solid IPA – and Round Corner's New Zealand-inspired West Coast IPA delivers. Described as a "fiesta" of hops, 10 Hours in LA uses Kiwi Riwaka hops – a rarity in the UK. Although it takes its name from the notorious 10-hour layover faced when flying from New Zealand to the UK via the US, this tropical brew is bold and refreshing – better for a day in the summer sun than the airport lounge.

roundcornerbrewing.com

GIMBER

As any fan of ginger flavour will tell you, traditional drinks like ginger beers often veer on the side of sickly-sweet rather than fiery ginger. A swathe of new switchels and other ginger tipples hitting the market are finally righting this wrong, including Gimber. But this product's USP is its versatility. For a tongue-tingling refresher, you can drink Gimber mixed with sparkling water, or you can include it in any number of cocktails. On cool nights, it also makes a fantastic ginger tea.

uk.gimber.com



ROLLASNAX SWEET & SALTY

If you have eaten one too many bland bags of granola in your time, allow me to introduce you to Sweet & Salty by Rollasnax. The granola experts at Rollagranola have hit the jackpot with their new range of trail mixes, but this variety, with its surprising kick of heat, is the winner for me. Not only does it have a pleasing mix of textures, which any granola worth its salt should contain, but the combination of glazed walnuts and cashews, cocoa brittle and chilli almonds was enough to see me devour the pack in record time.

rollagranola.com



THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Paul Wedgwood, chef patron of Wedgwood the Restaurant



Wedgwood the Restaurant is in the heart of Edinburgh, on the Royal Mile. We are lucky here in Edinburgh to have access to an incredible Scottish larder, from fresh fish caught off the coast of Fife to Scotch beef, farmed just miles from the restaurant.

The beauty about living in Edinburgh is the abundance of green space and woodlands. I will often forage in Edinburgh and North Berwick for ingredients to add to dishes. This month I will be on the hunt for coastal vegetables like scurvy grass and some sweet cicely for our restaurant menu when we reopen in May.

Using produce and ingredients from around the city means there are zero food miles which is a bonus. We are so lucky to have some amazing artisan producers in Edinburgh. They pour their heart and soul into everything they make, and it really shows in the taste and quality. Like Brand East Fortune's farm shop, they offer everything from amazing artisan sausages to freshly laid eggs.

We also have fantastic markets on weekends in Leith, Stockbridge and Grassmarket. This allows chefs and restaurateurs to meet suppliers and sample produce, and it is a great way to build relationships. If I am considering a new supplier and they have a stall at one of the markets, I will go and have a chat and pick something up to try at home.

Since opening the restaurant in 2007, my aim was to champion small independent suppliers. I still work with some who started supplying us 14 years ago. I have worked with Ben from Fungi & Forage since 2008, just months after opening the restaurant. Even though I forage myself, Ben is on hand to help if I am too busy. He provides some of the best foraged ingredients that have been harvested sustainably. I have worked with Guy Grieves from The Ethical Shellfish Company since the restaurant's inception. He supplies us with phenomenal shellfish and scallops caught just off the west coast of Scotland. Sustainable fishing is at the heart of what they do, and they are just amazing.

I use Castle Game who are based in Linlithgow, West Lothian for all my game. I love their Mallard; it has regularly featured on our takeaway menu. These guys have branched out recently and started working with local fishermen. They are bringing in produce straight from the boats that is of exceptional value. I recently got some squat lobster, and it was incredible.

Lunan Bay Farm further up the east coast provides me with organic goat. They are the best supplier I have used for goat, whether it's getting a whole carcass or broken down, it's second to none. Sometimes I will get some asparagus and honeyberries from them when they are in season. We are very lucky to have all this produce on our doorstep. I truly believe that Scotland has some of the best produce in the world.

> "We are lucky here in Edinburgh to have access to an incredible Scottish larder, from fresh fish caught off the coast of Fife to Scotch beef"

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

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A FAMILY FEELING

Cracking the code of the Mediterranean diet

The benefits of the Mediterranean diet have long been preached by chefs, health gurus and those lucky enough to live along the beloved sun-drenched coast. Rich in vegetables, legumes, fish and unsaturated fats like olive oil, the diet has for decades been linked with good health by the likes of the NHS and the World Health Organisation.

But the allure of the Mediterranean diet extends beyond its health credentials and its classic, unbeatable flavours. New research conducted by Spain's Universitat Oberta de Catalunya and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona gives us a clue as to why. Through extensive interviews with families, researchers uncovered one of the more unsuspecting aspects of the Mediterranean diet: the social element.

Families that ate together while sitting around a table – phones firmly in pockets and TVs switched off – reaped more health benefits than those that dined alone, staring at screens. And in fact, when families devoted less time to shared meals, they were also found to follow the Mediterranean diet to a lesser extent.

Researcher Anna Bach-Faig said the Mediterranean diet is "much more than a list of foods. It is a cultural model which includes how these foods are selected, produced, processed and consumed." This isn't the first time that Mediterranean cuisine's vast cultural impact has been assessed. In 2013, the United Nations agency Unesco recognised the Mediterranean diet on a list of the "intangible cultural heritage of humanity" – and in doing so, noted that eating together was one of its foundational elements.

As we exit lockdown in the UK, and warmer weather brings opportunities for dining in Covid-safe al fresco fashion, there is likely to be a renewed focus on this more sociable style of eating. Fine food retailers have the distinct role of not only selling food and drink, but also selling experiences and joyful moments that are best enjoyed in company. Take a page from the Italians' book and promote togetherness alongside your products this spring and summer. "A healthy diet is not just what we eat but also how we eat it", Anna said – and we couldn't agree more.

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





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

William Reed
INFORMING BUSINESS GROWTH