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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the May issue of *Speciality Food*. Spring has officially sprung, and green shoots are appearing left, right and centre as the fine food sector shakes of its early-year slumber and looks to make the most of the opportunities the warmer weather brings.

Picnics, barbecues, al fresco eating and an abundance of delicious, locally-grown produce – there's a lot to love about this time of year, and it's positive to see that consumers feel the same, if the Easter 2023 footfall is anything to go by.

In this issue, we're celebrating the season with a raft of spring/summer flavours – from what to stock to make the most of Brits' love of barbecues, and the food and drink to fill your shelves with to satisfy your customers' appetite for outdoor and seasonal eating, to the trending drinks raring to quench their thirst and top up your sales.

Plus, alongside this issue you'll find *Cheese Buyer*, our annual dive into the fine cheese world. Enjoy.

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How the King's coronation has boosted patriotism and a focus on local

As the Coronation of King Charles III is celebrated, we explore how the 'Buy British' movement has had a boost as a result

Events like a coronation are a chance for independent retailers to focus on high quality British products and cash in on increased interest in local fare. Indeed, according to Mintel, just under half (45%) of consumers say the coronation of King Charles III makes them feel more patriotic or proud to be British.

Increased patriotism

One retailer who is experiencing a tangible boost to British patriotism is Mark Kacary, managing director at Norfolk Deli. Based just eight miles from Sandringham, the home of King Charles III and Queen Camilla's private country retreat, Mark says it's not unknown for a member of the royal family to be spotted in town or even in his shop.

"What this event offers is a whole variety of opportunities for the independent sector. It has been clear for many years how HRH King Charles III has been a leading advocate for locally made food and for a greener society, and an independent food and drink retailer has the golden opportunity to take a lead over and above the corporates. Businesses like ours usually have a direct link to the producer (unlike a supermarket) so it's the perfect time to highlight this."

This is also felt by Simon Jones, co-owner of Forest Deli. "All the local shops work together as much as we can to cross promote what we can to encourage people to try more non-processed food, and it is quite common that when they try it they notice the difference. Local cheeses and bacon are the products that especially tourists really comment on. We very often get tourists who buy products from us and come back to the shop before they leave to buy more, and some place regular orders for delivery to them as they can't get the quality where they live."

Cashing in on the younger generation

The regal affair is set to give a much-welcomed boost to Britain, and over a third (35%) of 'younger millennials' (aged 27-33) claim the coronation has made them want to buy more 'made in Britain' products, compared to an average of 29% of Brits, according to Mintel.

Indeed, as Francesca Smith, senior consumer and lifestyles analyst at Mintel, explained, "Despite the perception that views towards the monarchy are shifting, the research shows that younger Brits are excited to celebrate the occasion, whether attending a street party, purchasing memorabilia or commemorating with limited edition treats."

Appetite for limited edition coronation food peaks among the young, as a third (34%) of 16-34-year-olds say they are likely to buy treats such as Union Jack cakes and specially packaged food or drink, compared to only 14% of over-55s.

This is something Simon has certainly been getting involved in, as he told *Speciality Food*. "We are well known locally for our freshly made quiches, so the choice of Coronation Quiche was great news for us and before we even posted anything on social media, we had customers asking when they could order them."

With younger people increasingly interested in buying British for the coronation and beyond, independents have a key opportunity to cash in on this patriotism. As Andrew Goodacre, CEO of British Independent Retail Association (BIRA), explained, "Provenance is a strong marketing message – it implies supporting local suppliers, small business and being greener. All of these are important to the younger consumer."

Nicknamed the 'Green King', King Charles III is a committed environmentalist who has long campaigned for sustainability and better conservation, and this has appealed to younger shoppers.

But as Simon warned, "Getting positive messaging to the younger generations is always a bit harder as their food budget is generally lower, and finding the time to visit multiple independent retailers is just not possible for working people, so it is essential to have something eye-catching to get their attention."

Mark suggested independents "promote what you're doing on platforms the younger generation might feel most comfortable with. That might mean learning how to use social media or the difference between TikTok and Twitter."

Boost to the high street

British events that everyone can get involved in are usually good for local high streets, especially if the weather is good.

In Hunstanton, where Mark's shop is located, "The Borough Council has arranged for a big screen overlooking the seafront and there are multiple events taking place over the weekend. This should bring us more people into town and give us a small (but needed) boost in footfall."

Simon is also looking forward to a busy weekend, as in the Forest of Dean, "There are events in town over the whole weekend, so while the actual day itself will probably be fairly quiet the events pull a lot of potential customers into town, so even if they're not shopping on the day, they will see what all the local specialist shops offer and come back the following week."

Tina McKenzie, policy chair at the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), added, "The King's Coronation arrives at a crucial juncture for small firms which have faced tough challenges over the past year. Times of celebration like this tend to drive a surge in consumer spending and offer a golden opportunity for not only high street but small businesses across the board. Embracing this opportunity can help small firms tap into a thriving market and drive growth and success."



"The 15 minute deli"



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES

I have recently been reading about the concept of the 15 Minute City. It concerns the design aim of modern city planning in order to support local communities where most, if not all, basic needs can be supplied within a walk of about 15 minutes.

It is by no means a new idea and harks back to the evolution of the local parish. Apparently, the idea of a parish originally emerged as an area being close enough to a church to hear the bells tolling and therefore walk to prayer in about 10-15 minutes.

From parishes grew villages and from villages grew larger communities. So for Londoners in the 18th century, most of the necessities of life such as the church, the market, the water fountain, the theatre or the school could be found within a 10-15 minute walk which equates to a radius of 100 acres.

In Paris, where they take the quality of life very seriously with defined quartiers and arrondissements, they calculate that all the needs of the local citizens should be accommodated within one kilometre.

Sadly, there seem to be a few neighbourhoods of modern London I can think of that do not provide such a rich fabric of amenities within a short walk. The internal combustion engine and modern planning have played their part in redrawing the map of local communities.

In some ways our own shop has undergone a similar evolution over time, and especially difficult times, by trying to expand the offering and reach out to a wider range of customers.

It is true to say that we have a large shop and that sometimes we are not sure what to do with different parts of it. But nevertheless, over the years we have evolved into something quite different to what we started out as.

In the 1970s, our opening company motto was 'Providing good things for the larder' which sounded very much like an episode of *Upstairs Downstairs*. (A popular television programme based on a family living round the corner, albeit 80 years before our arrival).

At the time we were perceived to be rather expensive, somewhat traditional and perhaps out of step with the direction of austerity Britain where everything was going self service. However, by extending our opening hours and introducing a larger delicatessen counter with a cake counter and offering late night opening and deliveries we started to broaden the appeal to more customers.

When we moved to our newer and larger location in 2004 I even contemplated opening a post office in one third of the shop in order to draw in footfall! That idea fortunately withered on the vine.

However, we did introduce a coffee shop, newspapers, cigarettes and cigars (please don't tell anyone), household products and various well-known brands that I hesitate to mention. Most controversially – to ourselves at least – we opened a fine food market on our very own doorstep. This was essentially to draw customers to the new location of the shop and counterintuitively has actually worked very well for us.

In recent times we have introduced an ATM machine prompted by local bank closures, started selling cookware, introduced local start up artisans, worked with a delivery platform and extended the range of own label products.

There are other items in the pipeline as well, but it is always important to remember where the bread is buttered and not neglect the core business of promoting high quality products. However, the range of services a speciality food shop can provide in 15 minutes may be a lot more than 'good things for the larder', especially in austerity Britain.

> "It is always important to remember where the bread is buttered and not neglect the core business of promoting high quality products. The range of services a speciality food shop can provide in 15 minutes may be a lot more than 'good things for the larder', especially in austerity Britain"

How indies can communicate the benefits of seasonal eating

Here's how to help consumers eat more seasonal produce this summer

According to research from Ocado, over two-thirds (70%) of Brits want to eat more seasonal produce this year.

The study showed that consumer interest in eating more seasonally has risen following the recent nationwide fruit and vegetable shortages due to extreme weather in the Mediterranean causing supermarkets to ration peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes.

During this period, farm shops and markets saw an uplift in footfall with their short supply chains and local connections. Therefore, with less than one in five Brits currently basing their food shop on what is in season, indies have a key opportunity to help consumers focus on seasonal produce and boost sales.



HOW INDIES CAN HELP

Thanks to their short supply chains, fine food retailers are in a unique position to help consumers shift to a more planet-friendly, seasonal way of eating, and communicating this message is easier than you might think.

Lydia Tomkinson, marketing executive at Eversfield Organic, suggested, "Independent retailers can educate their customers about what is currently in season by putting a spotlight on this produce and its local origins. Therefore, customers make more informed decisions around seasonality and the growing, harvesting and transportation.

"We communicate the numerous benefits of eating local, seasonal produce with our customers through informative and entertaining articles posted on our Newsbeet blog, discussing issues such as the hunger gap and the environmental impact of food miles, as well as why eating seasonal results in fresher, tastier produce.

"We regularly publish recipes featuring our favourite seasonal produce for that time of year, helping our customers to get creative with produce farmed on British soils and feature seasonal produce prominently in our marketing emails and social media posts."

Guy Watford, founder of Riverford, also highlighted indies' power to hold conversations with their customers – something the multiples cannot do. "Talking to customers is key, it's all about sharing knowledge and getting people excited to cook and eat with the seasons.

"Creating content for social media channels can help to reach a wider audience, but it could be as simple as having information in the shop about where veg has come from and who has grown it – to provide the real farm to table experience", he added.

> "Independent retailers can educate their customers about what is currently in season by putting a spotlight on this produce and its local origins"

Cash boost for organic farming good news for fine food retailers

Farmers who convert to organic will receive up to a third more cash than last year as the government increases support for nature-friendly farming.

Payments for organic farming are rising by an average of 25% for those entering a new scheme with Countryside Stewardship. The government has boosted all payments for farming that benefits the environment via Countryside Stewardship, but the increase for organic is significantly above the average increase of 10%.

It follows the 11th year of consecutive growth for the UK organic market, which topped £3.1 billion in 2022 after a challenging year for both businesses and shoppers.

GOOD NEWS FOR INDIES

As fine food retailers focus on producers championing nature-friendly and sustainable farming methods, this increased support for conversion is good news.



Adrian Steele, organic sector advisor at the Soil Association, told *Speciality Food*, "This is welcome news for those who champion organic and sustainably sourced local produce including fine food retailers such as farm shops and food halls. This will help secure long-term local supplies and increase the volume and varieties of fresh produce.

"Local and independent retailers have already demonstrated that their local supply chains deliver greater resilience than large scale supply chains in the multiples where many supermarkets have endured significant disruption and empty shelves."

Roger Kerr, CEO of Organic Farmers and Growers, explained, "We know that the consumer appetite for organic produce remains strong. With the recent passing of the Genetic Technology Act, there is likely to be more shoppers seeking reassurance about the integrity of their food which organic's rigorous standards continue to deliver."

Sustainable farming charity Sustain also welcomed the news, as James Woodward, sustainable farming officer, added, "The support for organic farming will hopefully incentivise an increase in the uptake of conversion payments.

"In turn, that should increase the domestic market for organic food from UK farms, which will benefit SME retailers. Currently, the UK imports much of the organic food it sells that could otherwise be produced in the UK."

Summer food and drink trends to watch

From the hottest flavours to the coolest drinks, here's what to stock all summer long to be bang on trend

1 ALCOHOL-FREE BEVERAGES
Non-alcoholic drinks are bang on trend in 2023. This summer, shoppers will increasingly be seeking something to sip on without a headache.

This is partly due to the emergence of new brands on the market championing taste, and branding appealing to the younger generation. Pinterest reported a 220% year-on-year increase for "fancy non-alcoholic drinks", while searches for "mocktail bar" were up 75% year-on-year in 2022.

Indeed, according to new research from Club Soda, one in five (19%) respondents indicated they drank alcohol-free drinks because they "often prefer the taste of alcohol-free drinks". In the past, poor perceptions of the quality of alcohol-free drinks have been a significant factor in preventing their consumption. This shows attitudes may be changing.

The Guardian recently reported that British 16-24-year-olds are the driving generation shunning alcohol, with 26% fully teetotal. Retailers can cash in on younger shoppers by stocking innovative alcohol-free brands with eco-credentials and quirky branding.

2 TINNED SEAFOOD
Tinned fish went viral in 2022 as TikTok was flooded with the hashtag #TinnedFishDateNight. And with brands such as The Rock Fish making tinned seafood fun, there is no surprise this staple has made a resurgence.

While tuna was the top choice last year, in 2023, this trend will expand into different types of fish. "We predict a rise in the consumption of canned seafood, especially species lower on the food chain like sardines, anchovies and mackerel," says Heather Scott, SVP of marketing at Wild Planet. "This is being driven largely by a cultural zeitgeist celebrating the wonderful world of tinned fish."

With summer on the horizon, independent retailers have the opportunity to upsell this previously underrated storecupboard staple as a healthy and eco-friendly alternative to meat. Think summer salads with sardines and fresh tomatoes, salsa verde made with anchovy and served with grilled fish and vegetables, and lemony orzo with tuna, olives and roasted peppers.

3 WORLD FLAVOURS
While the classic picnic and Great British BBQ are always firm favourites during the warmer months, consumers are being more experimental with their flavours this year.

One revolution is the emergence of 'swicy' foods – sweet and spicy. South Korean cuisine features plenty of swicy options such as hot sauce mixed with strawberry jam on fried chicken, and thanks to a growing interest in Korean cooking, swicy food seems to be on track for some good attention in the months ahead.

Independent retailers should also look to stock sauces, bastes and marinades from from the Middle East, the Mediterranean, South America and Asia but also many creative fusions for BBQ season.

West African cuisine has really been heating up recently, with Google Trends data showing searches for Nigerian foods alone were up 250% between 2021 and 2022. This colourful and flavour-packed cuisine certainly lends itself to the summer months. Think big pans of Jollof rice, plates of plantain chips with fresh dips, and vibrant coconut salads.





How indies can avoid poor quality pork being sold in the UK

The UK government is considering tightening control over the Food Standards Agency (FSA) after news that allegedly fraudulent pork products found their way into grocery retailers.

An investigation by the trade publication *Farmers Weekly* found that until at least the end of 2020, one of the UK's top food manufacturers had sold mislabelled and sometimes rotten meat to retailers.

It also found that tens of thousands of tonnes of foreign pork mislabelled as British had been finding its way into the supply chain each week. The supplier has been accused by former employees of regularly 'washing' visibly bad hams in salt water, and of mixing rotting pork with fresh product for further processing.

Independents can avoid being victim to food fraud by committing to support small suppliers and focusing on locally sourced produce.

According to Glen Burrows, co-founder of The Ethical Butcher, "For retailers, the most important thing is to visit your suppliers and see if their methods of production align with your values. Do not assume that the terms free range or RSPCA assured mean that the animals are raised using methods conducive to their natural behaviour or regeneration of the land."

Therésè Coffey, the secretary of state for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), told the House of Commons that she would look at bringing the FSA under her department's control.

Darren Davies, the head of the FSA's national food crime unit (NFCU), said the cost-of-living crisis could mean that food fraud increased as suppliers face pressure to turn a profit.

5 characteristics of 2023's shopper

We've detailed five key qualities of the modern customer that will help retailers succeed throughout 2023 and beyond

1 THEY ARE MORE DEMANDING
As leading shopper and consumer behaviouralist, Ken Hughes, says, the typical consumer is now "more demanding than ever before". They want to shop around and understand how to get the best product for the best price. But they are also focusing on the impact of the brand or business they are purchasing from and want to see that their spending is going to a good cause. Indies can talk to customers to find out exactly what they are looking for to cater to demand and boost sales.

2 THEY CARE ABOUT THE PLANET
Despite price rises, consumers are still valuing sustainability. Fine food independents can boost their shop's sustainability message in several ways – from leading the charge in sustainable packaging to flying the eco flag on social media. With more consumers shopping according to their values, it's never been more important to shout about the work your shop is doing, whether that's supporting a cause or stocking local products with low travel miles.

3 THEY ARE SEEKING OUT VALUE
With inflation still extremely high, consumers are thinking more carefully about where they spend. As a result, "shoppers are taking action and clearly hunting around for the best value," Kantar head of retail and consumer insight, Fraser McKevitt, says. "This is a fiercely competitive sector and if people don't like the prices in one store they will go elsewhere". Independents can communicate with shoppers to demonstrate that they can actually be more cost-effective than supermarkets in some cases and explain why their products cost a little more in others.

4 THEY ARE KEEPING LITTLE LUXURIES
While shoppers are holding onto their hard-earned pennies and making sacrifices across the board, it appears that they are still choosing to spend on little luxuries. Referred to as the 'Lipstick Effect', consumers are cutting back on bigger ticket items but allowing themselves small treats such as their favourite snacks. Keep these smaller treat items front and centre in your store and you'll generate a little extra basket spend.

5 THEY'RE (STILL) SHOPPING ONLINE
Thought online shopping would be a flash in the pan after Covid-19? Experts believe that although many consumers are returning to the shops and footfall is picking up, a number of Brits are still keen to order food and drink online. "Businesses must ensure they have optimised their digital stores to make the shopping journey as transparent and friction-free as possible, making sure consumers aren't surprised by any extra costs", according to Digital River chief revenue officer Ted Rogers.

"A few musings"



STEFANO CUOMO
MACKNADE

It was early Autumn when we started to hear the rumbles. Of course, it had always been a scenario, no real clarity as to what it was, what its impacts could be... Risks were far away and under control, if indeed there were any. Regardless, we didn't need to know much more.

By Christmas ever greater numbers of people seemed to be discussing it, still without real clarity as to the impact it would have on us, and our day to day; no real sense of urgency as to the need to discover more. Then bang!

By spring we all knew what it was and that it was going to change our lives...

This could have been written for Covid-19, as it could for ChatGPT!

We are living through epic, societal-shaking times!

As I start to try and understand my own personal relationship with the AI landscape (literal and imagined) of the here and now, and that which lies ahead, I am looking for historic reference points and contemporary analogies that will help guide me through.

Both of which, I feel, may well be of little value as the next stage of the digital transformation of our societies takes shape in ways that we have never seen before!

How to make sense of something we are told we cannot ignore, that we must start to bed into our strategical thinking, a platform that will be adopted at a faster pace than any step-change technology we have ever seen before (yet, ironically is being stumped by the lack of computing capacity to allow for its very evolution!)?

It would seem that one silver lining of Covid has been to set us up for this rapid change in our realities, leading to the collective inclination and drive to invest in the positives (the 'war footing' approach to vaccines having pushed the mRNA agenda, as an exciting example) and not only struggle with the opaque negatives.

Critically, I am aware that we will not simply move, one day to the next, to an AI dominated world, but as with everything, there will be shades, different adopters and subjective priorities.

Inevitably cash will dictate directions that AI (to continue to use this amalgamous acronym) travels but that has been the case with intelligence full stop.

Surely, we are moving to a point in which intelligence is valued in itself, and categorised accordingly, not artificial or human, but by socially agreed, and disagreed(!), strata (I can see this running parallel to the adoption of consideration of how we engage in our natural world, perhaps most vividly in our relationship with animals and our consumption and use of them).

The benefits will be huge, even if the pace discombobulating.

What 'expert systems' will bring will be tremendous and have the potential to drive real social equity, delivering the human and environmental harmony we strive for.

Of course the spectre of job losses inevitably raises its brutal head, but as with platform shifts of the past (there I go!) we can be confident of new jobs that will be created through the beneficence of the new technology, and if I look selfishly at our own sector – the true service sector – I believe there will be a 'human premium': the lower paid jobs will rise up and deliver, whilst more technical, previously highly valued, roles will be assimilated into an economically, far more effective and dynamic, AI driven structure.

People want to buy from people, shared narratives, shared sense of place and being, this will continue to be our shared strength... trust!

A quick Google and you can find the AI generated images of Boris Johnson being manhandled by a couple of bobbies!

Whether such an image delivers a sense of schadenfreude or not, to think that these AI generated and doctored images, mashed with their collaborative storylines, will soon be upon us, in ever greater numbers, trying to shape our understandings and beliefs, makes me think of those stories of the past... Pardoners pedalling pig bones!

Nothing really changes, so we stay curious, we stay close to those we trust, we question our sources and then we make the right decisions together: everything a community focused business does day in day out!

I believe this new world will stutter and stumble as it charges ahead, at pace, but it will bring solutions to the human conundrum on our finite planet, and most of all I believe it will allow us to cherish being human in the most positive and pure of ways.

> "The benefits will be huge, if not discombobulating. What 'expert systems' will bring will be tremendous and have the potential to drive real human equity, delivering the human and environmental harmony we strive for"

THE STORY BEHIND THE STATS

14.2%

According to retail experts MRI Springboard, over the seven days Sunday to Easter Saturday, footfall was +14.2% higher than the week before – the largest week-on-week increase since the week leading up to Christmas 2022. Coastal and historic towns were the winners over Easter, and the greatest week-on-week increases were in the East (+15.9%), the South West (+17.3) and Wales (+18%), all of which have extensive coastlines and a strong representation of coastal towns. Speaking to *Speciality Food*, Emma Mosey, owner of Yolk Farm, commented, "The figures seem to suggest that coastal and historic towns and high streets benefitted the most – most likely due to the fine weather drawing people out for a wander – and any farm shop with an open area where people can walk around in the sunshine will no doubt have seen an increase as a popular location for sunny days."

57%

A new international report commissioned by Picadeli found that over half (57%) of Brits believe that clearer labelling of sustainable foods would encourage them to make more sustainable food choices when doing their food shops. One in two people also stated that clearer labelling of 'carbon calories' would encourage them to make more sustainable choices (53%). The report also unearthed a 'green gap' both in knowledge and accessibility to eating sustainable food. In the UK, only 32% of respondents had heard of the Paris Agreement, and of those just 14% could identify the carbon emission goals for a meal. Independent retailers have a key opportunity here to educate consumers on the environmental benefits and impact of their food choices, as the report clearly shows consumers want to make the right decisions when they shop.

370k

Research from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) shows that 370,000 small businesses are at risk of shrinking, closing or restructuring their businesses as a result of the cuts to government support. As Martin McTague, national chair at the FSB explained, "Small independent retailers who fixed their energy contracts at high rates last year will see, from this month, their bills revert back to the pre-Energy Bill Relief Scheme level. This could mean three or even four-fold increases in their energy bills as government support has been largely downscaled."

19.2%

Food inflation hit 19.2% in March, up from 18.4% in February. Some of the sharpest rises were seen in olive oil, which rose by 49%, milk by 38%, cheese by 24%, and ready meals by 21%. Andrew Goodacre, CEO at the British Independent Retail Association, expressed concern over the latest figures. "With so much consumer spending being spent on essentials such as food, there is less disposable income for the discretionary spending that so many smaller retailers rely on. I would like to see some investigation into the food supply chain as inflation on non-food items is much lower."

NEWS IN BRIEF

BRITISH PIG BREEDS IN DANGER AS PORK INDUSTRY SHRINKS

With the pig market failure causing a shrinkage of the British pork industry, owing to farmers being offered less than the cost of production for their products, the UK pig population has fallen from about eight million in the 1990s to just over five million today. There is now even less incentive to keep classic breeds, which are already more expensive to rear. According to the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST), the situation for UK native breeds is "worrying".

LABOUR AND SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES HINDER SUSTAINABILITY

As consumer support for sustainable packaging gains momentum, the food and drink industry in the UK is being hindered by labour shortages and issues with supply chains. While 36% of senior decision-makers consider sustainable packaging important, 93% are planning to focus on issues other than sustainability, according to research from Tetrapak. The issues have been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and resulting shortages, in addition to aftershocks from Covid-19.

GOVERNMENT BOOSTS COFFEE INDUSTRY WITH NEW DEAL

The government has signed the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) 2022 in a bid to strengthen the industry, which contributes billions of pounds to the UK economy each year. Alongside an event organised by the UK's representative organisation of the coffee industry, the British Coffee Association (BCA), the signing took place at the ICO headquarters in London. The minister of state for Food, Farming and Fisheries signed the agreement, and commented, "This international treaty champions the industry globally, and I hope the UK can help continue its drive for new standards of sustainability for our coffee."

FOCUS ON **LOCAL**

With the cost-of-living crisis making price hikes, Simon Jones, co-owner of Forest Deli explains why prioritising local makes business sense



The focus on local food is noticeably growing, with inflation and shortages people are asking more questions as to where their food comes from. We have always prioritised local producers as working together makes business sense for all as it keeps money in the local economy, as well as all the food miles, packaging and knowing it's fresh.

The egg 'shortage' has been very strange, as all the independent shops where we are in the Forest of Dean sell local eggs, and there has been no shortage for us at all. Many people were surprised that we sell free-range local eggs cheaper than the local supermarkets. Meat and poultry is another area where customers want local, and to know that animal welfare is at a premium.

We collect our wild boar sausages, bacon and more from a local farm every Friday, so we literally see the animals and know the farmers really well so we can totally vouch for the welfare, and the quality of the products.

If it's local and you're passionate about that, the customers can see that and will take our recommendations and ideas, and the more this happens, the better off we all are.

> "The focus on local food is noticeably growing, with inflation and shortages people are asking more questions as to where their food comes from"

SPOTLIGHT ON: AHMAD TEA

Ahmad Tea, the family-owned UK tea company and a global leader in fine tea, explores the loose leaf tea revival and the opportunity this offers speciality food retailers





Right now, loose leaf tea is having something of a revival, and Ahmad Tea is leading the charge. As a business, the brand's mission is to share their love of extraordinary tea, bringing communities together with their passion for tea and commitment to quality.

Loose tea lends itself perfectly to this – not only in the craft, theatre and beauty of the brewing process, but also in the depth of flavour and freshness that's harder to achieve with teabags.

As a family business that's been present in the tea industry for three generations, Ahmad Tea wants to change the way tea is viewed, to celebrate it as a delicious beverage that creates genuine emotional connections. That means producing the finest loose tea that matches the time and effort that goes into it, from crop to cup.

Exceptional artisan tea: Galerie Du Thé

Ahmad Tea's Great Taste award-winning luxury loose leaf brand, Galerie du Thé, is breaking new boundaries. The brand has used their heritage and connections in the industry to source rare, handcrafted teas, sustainably made by skilled artisans in exceptionally remote, single-estate tea gardens, from a red oolong from South East Taiwan to a green tea from Fujian province, China. What elevates these teas to the next level is not only the knowledge and skill that goes into the growing and harvesting, but also the steps taken to maintain the freshness of the teas; using both traditional and the state-of-the-art techniques including nitrogen flushing, vacuum packing the tea at source, storing it in climate controlled facilities, and removing oxygen and water vapour from the packaging to preserve the freshness and depth of flavour.

A Natural Collaboration: Kew Beyond the Leaf

The Beyond the Leaf collection with Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, also taps into this. A collaboration between two iconic British brands, the Great Taste award- winning collection balances Ahmad Tea's four generations of tea knowledge with the natural beauty and heritage of Kew to create a range that is refined, elegant, and quintessentially British.



This partnership with one of the UK's best loved natural heritage brands is resounding well with speciality food retailers across the UK. It is supporting ground-breaking conservation and preservation work to create a world where nature is protected and managed sustainably, whilst tapping into growing demand for responsibly sourced, high quality, great tasting tea.

Tea 4 Good

Ahmad Tea is committed to people and planet. They're passionate about bringing communities together to help those in need, and donate a substantial percentage of profits to support local grassroots projects. One of these is a partnership with Children In Need India, the first project of its kind in the Assam region, which produces half of India's tea. The project aids women and children in the transition from pregnancy to infancy through the critical first 1,000 days of a newborn's life. The work to date has provided vital access to health, nutrition, water and sanitation. It's about engaging the whole plantation community; changing behaviours, breaking the negative cycle of poor standards of care, and educating women on their rights and entitlements.

Tea artistry: creating the perfect cup

The perfect cup of tea isn't created without a lot of hard work; tea artistry takes time and dedication. Ahmad Tea has some of the world's best Tea Tasters on their team whose job is to consider the compatibility of different teas, like an artist creating colour. Tea Tasters sample up to 500 cups each day to ensure the blends are of the highest quality and the taste is consistent. Senior Tea Taster, William Manning, describes the work that goes into creating the perfect cup: "I believe that tea blending is an art. It's constant trial and error. Sometimes you can select the two best tasting teas and when you put them together, they clash. But when you create the perfect blend there's no other way to describe it other than euphoria! To be a tea artist takes a huge amount of passion and determination to achieve something at the highest level."

> "To be an artist takes a huge amount of passion and determination to achieve something at the highest level"







How to build sustainability into the core of your fine food business

We explore how independent retailers can make their business more appealing to sustainable shoppers

With the food and drink industry the second largest emitter of greenhouse gases on a global scale, sustainability is becoming more and more important to shoppers.

In order to build sustainability into your business, you need to know what consumers are looking for within the sector.

As James Woodward, campaign officer at Sustain, explained, "People are becoming more interested in how the food they eat is produced and where it comes from. Whether that be in an environmentally friendly way, to good ethical standards on things like animal welfare, or wanting to know they are supporting producers fairly.

"Therefore, a key thing for SME food businesses is to supply as much as possible from local farmers who produce food to high standards. This could include organic, Pasture for Life, and other certifications, but also build relationships with producers and get to know how they farm."

By building your supply chain around these producers, you can appeal to sustainable shoppers and make your business model greener. Additionally, using small, local suppliers is a more stable way to fill your shelves.

According to Jill Sargent, businesses development manager at Produced in Kent, "Supermarket shortages have helped highlight seasonality and locality – most independents haven't had empty shelves because they have good relationships with their supply chain and pay a fair price.

"Customers have started to value the certainty of supplies. Budgets may be tighter in 2023, so helping customers learn about seasonality and making the most of what they are buying is something the independents do brilliantly!"

There are plenty of ways for fine food retailers to make sustainability the focus of their business, and it certainly won't cost the earth.

As Jill explained, "There are big things like using renewable energy or paying a living wage. Then there are the small things – looking at the overall customer journey. Whether that's providing electric vehicle charging points, refill stations or recycling your cardboard boxes for deliveries or making sure any edible food 'waste' is reduced, re-distributed or recycled."

Jason Gibb, founder of Bread & Jam, agreed, "Indies should look at minimising food waste by working with platforms like Olio and Too Good to Go.

"Installing zero packaging stations for staple products like pasta, rice and cereals is a great way of reducing packaging and driving customer loyalty. Every retailer should set targets around packaging, carbon footprints and food waste and publicly display them in their shops to make sure they do them."

> "Budgets may be tighter in 2023, so helping customers learn about seasonality and making the most of what they are buying is something the independents do brilliantly"

Government rolls back energy support for businesses, leaving indies at risk

The energy price cap scheme has been replaced with a discount as the government scales back its support for businesses.

While energy bills were heavily subsidised by capping wholesale prices, which provided the industry with some short-lived relief, the government has now scaled back its support and replaced the current scheme with a discount.

The less generous Energy Bill Discount Scheme (EBDS) provides general businesses with a discount when electricity and gas prices hit £302/MWh and £107/MWh.

THE IMPACT ON INDIES

According to Jeff Moody, commercial director at the British Independent Retail Association, small retailers in particular will be hit hard.

He told *Speciality Food*, "As the EBRS has come to an end and been replaced by the EBDS (Energy Bills Discount Scheme) many retailers are now even more worried over fuel costs and their future business. Now retailers have a choice. We have a member who has said they are uncertain which way to go – do they go for a new fixed contract for a year at 30p a unit, when they had a fixed which ran out at 11p? The alternative is 85p not fixed. But if energy prices drop as predicted, 30p is a good deal for 12 months. Even so, it is still a 172% increase.

"Based on government figures, for a small shop, the support will fall from £6400 per annum to £400 per annum. So that small shop owner has to pay £500 per month more at a time when consumers are not spending as much."

As Martin McTague, national chair at the Federation of Small Businesses, explained, "Small independent retailers who fixed their energy contracts at high rates last year will see, from this month, their bills revert back to the pre-Energy Bill Relief Scheme level. This could mean three or even four-fold increases in their energy bills as government support has been largely downscaled.

"The replacement scheme won't touch the sides of these huge bills."

STAYING AFLOAT AS SUPPORT SLOWS

As the energy support scheme rolls back, indies will need to be resilient to stay afloat.

Jeff explained, "Retailers continue to work hard to keep prices, particularly of essentials, as low as possible by expanding value ranges and offering discounts for vulnerable groups. But consumer confidence is massively dampened and can be seen by large drops in footfall into shops.

"Indie retailers need to have a focus on quality brands whilst also offering some 'value' into their product range, either through discounting, bundled offers, etc."

However, there is hope on the horizon, as Enterprise Nation's latest barometer showed small business confidence is beginning to pick up.

According to founder Emma Jones, "While discretionary spending might be on hold, customers will now be more open to shopping around and so it's vital that small food businesses on the high street make sure they are using affordable ways to reach new customers to market their products and business. Using technology and social media are key ways to do this."





Free-range eggs back on sale as avian flu restrictions are lifted

After a challenging period for egg producers as a result of an avian flu outbreak, free-range is back on the menu

Independent retailers can now sell eggs labelled as free-range again after five months.

After five months of forced indoor housing due to the latest avian flu outbreak, free-range poultry is now allowed back outside. This means independent retailers, who specialise in high-welfare animal products, can now return to selling free-range eggs.

The move to keep chickens, turkeys and ducks inside piled more pressure on poultry producers, who had already warned of supply shortages amid rising costs. Indeed, since the start of the war in Ukraine last February, the cost of animal feed and energy has skyrocketed. Egg producers' energy bills were further increased by the need to keep animals indoors in lit and heated barns over the winter.

Egg farmers have said that increased costs may have a longer-term impact, as squeezed producers leave the industry or reduce the size of their flocks in the face of spiralling costs.

While the lifting of the housing order has been widely welcomed, officials are warning bird keepers to keep biosecurity measures in place to prevent future outbreaks.

Dr Christine Middlemiss, the UK's chief veterinary officer, commented, "The unprecedented nature of this outbreak has proved it's more important than ever for bird keepers to remain vigilant for signs of disease and maintain stringent standards of biosecurity."

Cunningham Butchers named Farm Shop & Deli Retailer of the Year 2023

Farm Shop & Deli Show returned to the NEC at the end of April, bringing the fine food industry together to announce the winners of the Retailer Awards.

Winning the title of Retailer of the Year was Cunningham Butchers, Food Hall & Steak House in Kilkeel, Northern Ireland.

The judges were impressed with Cunningham Butchers, as they explained, "A business that keeps on entering and as always, the entry is very good. They seem to have a thorough training scheme in place right across from induction and onwards health and hygiene and apprenticeship scheme with a local training college with already had five apprentices get full-time employment which is exemplary.

"There is so much going on at Cunninghams, it's incredible with shops and restaurant and concessions, producing their own butchery bakery ready meals et cetera. There's no denying that this is a serious business in Northern Ireland and one is always scored very highly in the awards and again this year looks likely to do the same."

"Steady, strong growth for an already well-established retailer operating across multiple sites and stores. Cunningham's clearly a huge part of their community through a great local approach to colleagues and product sourcing."

Thrilled to win the title, the 'whole Cunningham family' in a series of tweets, announced, "We only went and won the whole thing. Delighted to announce we won 'Best Retailer in the UK' at the Farm Shop and Deli Awards yesterday. The first business ever from Northern Ireland to win the overall UK award."

Taking the title of Newcomer of the Year was Flourish Foodhall & Kitchen in Bristol. Explaining why Flourish took the crown, the judges commented, "Deeply impressed by the employee care and attention in place, a terrific example of the future of employing people correctly! Lovely shop with plenty of potential."

Regional champions

Also announced on Tuesday were the regional winners from across the UK. For 2023, some of the regions were split into small and large retailers.

BEST RETAILER EAST ANGLIA – LARGE
The Goat Shed Farm Shop & Kitchen, Norwich

BEST RETAILER EAST ANGLIA – SMALL
The Prospects Trust Unwrapped, Ely

BEST RETAILER MIDLANDS – LARGE
Canalside Farm, Shop & Café, Great Haywood

BEST RETAILER MIDLANDS – SMALL
Broad Bean Delicatessen, Ludlow

BEST RETAILER NORTH EAST – LARGE
Yolk Farm, York

BEST RETAILER NORTH EAST – SMALL
George & Joseph Cheesemongers, Leeds

BEST RETAILER NORTHERN IRELAND – LARGE AND RETAILER OF THE YEAR
Cunningham Butchers, Food Hall & Steak House, Kilkeel

BEST RETAILER NORTHERN IRELAND – SMALL
Millar Meats and Fine Foods, Irvinestown

BEST RETAILER NORTH WEST – LARGE
Bells fishmongers ltd, Carlisle

BEST RETAILER NORTH WEST – SMALL
Chorlton Cheesemongers Ltd, Manchester

BEST RETAILER SCOTLAND – LARGE
The House of Bruar, Perth

BEST RETAILER SCOTLAND – SMALL
Kj's Bothy Bakery, Grantown-on-Spey

BEST RETAILER SOUTH EAST – LARGE
Macknade Food Hall, Faversham

BEST RETAILER SOUTH EAST – SMALL
The Kitchen Food Company, Oxford

BEST RETAILER SOUTH WEST
Great Cornish Food Store, Truro

BEST RETAILER WALES
Forage Farm Shop & Kitchen, Cowbridge

Planet Organic saved from administration by founders

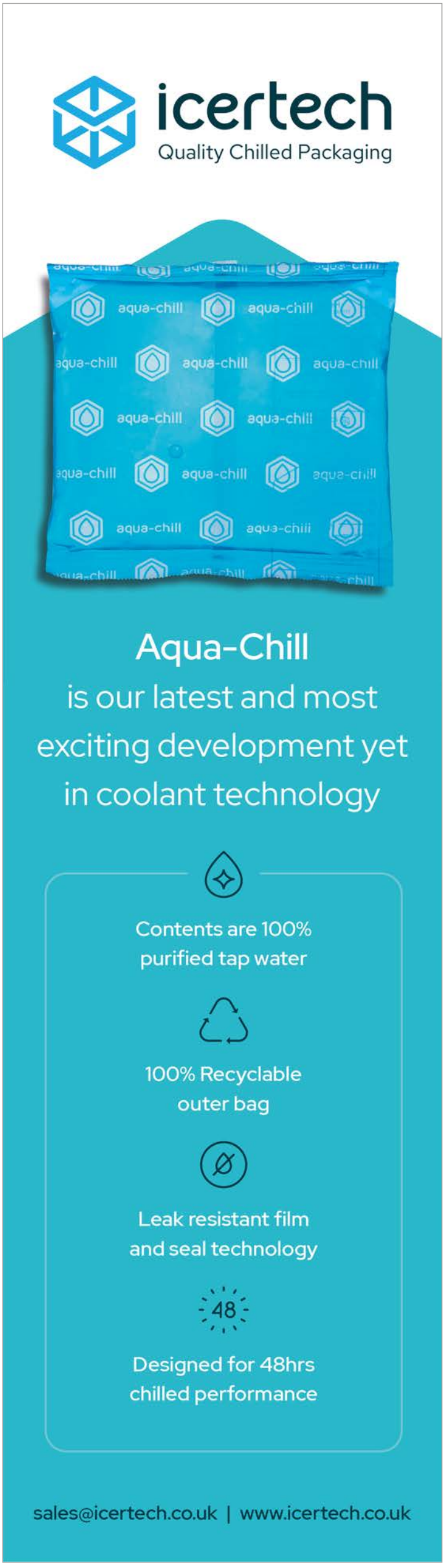
Planet Organic has been rescued from administration by Bioren Limited, whose shareholders include the founders of the organic supermarket chain.

The rescue bid saw Bioren beating out Waitrose, Sainsbury's and Holland & Barrett who had all previously expressed interest in the organic supermarket.

The deal will see 10 Planet Organic stores continue to trade in locations throughout London, safeguarding 194 jobs in-store and 71 jobs in the head office.

Looking ahead, the directors of Bioren Limited said they "plan to return to Planet Organic's vision and values". They hope to do so by reinvigorating the business and celebrating its mission, 'To promote health in the community', and to renew training and culture, "with the aim of inspiring people to eat well and create personal health and vitality while supporting the earth's health and biodiversity."

Interpath Advisory's head of restructuring and joint administrator, Will Wright, commented, "Planet Organic is a well-respected brand with wonderful stores and hard-working people that genuinely care about the customer experience, which is why over the years it has grown a very loyal customer base."



Take stock with our new food and drink round-up



Chococo on cocoa-driven mission

Dorset-based chocolate brand Chococo is celebrating its 20th year of trading by setting out on a mission to celebrate cocoa rather than sugar via its new single origin Hot Chocolate Flakes range and Chocolate Bar range.

The range of Hot Chocolate Flakes includes six different single origin cocoas for chocolate-lovers to choose from, while the Chocolate Bar range boasts 10 different variants ranging from single origin to flavoured options.

Claire Burnet, co-founder of Chococo, said, "After 20 years of working in the chocolate industry in the UK I can't believe how sweet most chocolate products, especially milk chocolate and hot chocolates, still are. It's so disappointing when you consider how much we all know about the damage caused by eating excessive amounts of sugar. Sadly, sugar is cheap and is still used to bulk out most milk chocolates (still the most popular type of chocolate) and hot chocolates available in the UK. To give you a sense of the difference, our signature Colombian origin milk chocolate certainly celebrates the cocoa as it contains 47% cocoa and just 30% added sugar, but it's got an amazing deliciously creamy flavour which our customers, both young and old, love."

chococo.co.uk

A NEW FRONTIER FOR FOOD PACKAGING



Bartec Paper & Packaging Ltd presents the latest cutting-edge food technology revolutionising the cheese industry. Italian-made Ovtene is an eco-friendly, sustainable and recyclable food packaging solution which significantly extends the life of food as a result of its unique antibacterial properties.

Based on the premise of an eggshell, it is made primarily using calcium carbonate, and uses 60% less plastic than alternatives, making it 100% recyclable with plastics. It is resistant to liquids and permeable gases, creating an ideal microclimate to protect against moulds and other agents that deteriorate fresh food products.

Each day over 25,000,000 sheets and bags of Ovtene are used in Italy, Europe and North America, and the demand from the UK's speciality food and artisan cheese sectors is expected to be sizeable. The Bartec team is able to convert the size and quantity of plain roll Ovtene as required by UK customers, and branded roll and bags will soon be available also.

Patrick Ford, director at Bartec Paper and Packaging Ltd said, "We are excited to be converting Ovtene and, after working with our partners in Italy for some time, we are thrilled to be launching this product in the UK. We work closely with our customers to provide bespoke products which address key issues such as reducing waste, recyclability and sustainability. We think there are so many applications for this material and look forward to developing new solutions across and beyond our existing customer base."

bartecpackaging.co.uk



Tracklements creates special seasonal sauce

Tracklements have created a new product perfect for the new season: Wild Garlic Sauce.

Thanks to wild garlic's uniquely heady, sweet and mellow flavour, this is a step above conventional garlic sauces, and having been carefully blended with honey and mustard it is the perfect way for garlic lovers to indulge in something a little different this spring.

Serving suggestions include stirring into pasta, as a sauce for baked sweet potato, a dip for potato pancakes, or served alongside hot smoked trout.

Guy Tullberg, managing director of Tracklements, said, "This sauce takes us right back to the origin of preserving. It takes the best of the season and turns it into something that can be enjoyed all year in a multitude of ways. I'm a fan!"

tracklements.co.uk

Gut-friendly soda brand hits market



FHIRST Living Soda has entered the independent sector, offering an all-natural, zero-sugar, gut-friendly beverage.

There are three variants in the three-strong launch range: Cherry Vanilla, Passion Fruit and Ginger Mandarin.

The new launch is directed towards the increasing number of consumers aged 18-48 who are actively seeking out quality, health-driven functional drinks, and its goal was to to combine the benefits of probiotics and prebiotics into a drink with a soda profile.

The 'living sodas' contain a probiotic strain offering 2 billion live cultures, as well as five grams of prebiotic dietary plant fibre and zinc.

Van Middelem, founder of FHIRST, said, "The global pandemic encouraged us all to think again about our immunity. 70% of our immune system lies in our gut, and gut health has been linked to the health of many other organs, including the heart and the brain. This has created huge demand for pro- and prebiotic products. Shelf-stable prebiotic soda sales increased 326%1 YOY, while functional beverages containing probiotics were the top sales drivers with sales up +4,357.4% vs regular soda and carbonates, which were only up +12.8%."

fhirst.com



FATSO releases Coronation bar



Dark chocolate brand FATSO has launched a brand new bar in celebration of the upcoming coronation of King Charles III.

The new bar, King's Ransom, is a vegan-friendly combination of whole pistachios, cocoa nibs and a hint of mint set in high quality 60% Columbian chocolate which has been sourced from single origin and 100% ethically-driven Luker's Farm.

As with the other bars in the FATSO range, the new bar is packaged in a 100% recyclable box printed with vegetable ink and containing a home compostable flow wrap.

Ella McKay, co-founder of FATSO, said, "We are overjoyed with the UK's positive and embracing attitude toward FATSO since we launched, so it was only right to celebrate with a new flavour, just in time for the big event of the year: The King's Coronation. Dark chocolate and mint is a classic combination, but as you know by now, at FATSO we are all about challenging the boring and delivering epic, uncompromising deliciousness, which is why we have embraced more and added in crunchy cocoa nibs and whole pistachios. The ingredients are so decadent, we had to hold The King Ransom to make it!"

sofatso.com

Cambrook launches indulgent new line



Premium nut specialist Cambrook Foods has added an indulgent new variant to its range of roasted and seasoned nuts: chocolate almonds.

There are two jar sizes available – 100g and 220g – and both offer baked California almonds coated with a salted dark, creamy milk and rich white chocolate. Both new additions are made in small batches by expert makers.

Deborah Bradfield, sales and marketing manager at Cambrook Foods, said, "At Cambrook HQ we are totally in love with our new Chocolate Almond Jars – the biggest discussion however is which is the favourite – the white chocolate almond, salted dark or creamy milk? My favourite is to eat all three together but we will let you decide! It was a such a great NPD project – nuts and chocolate go hand in hand beautifully, so we decided to create something absolutely delicious and perfect for retail for year-round sales and of course Christmas. We hope you enjoy them as much as we do."

cambrookfoods.co.uk

Colourful new additions to pickle aisle



Family-owned speciality food importer, distributor and brand owner, Empire Bespoke Foods, has launched a pair of colourful fermented crunchy vegetables under the popular Mrs Elswood brand.

The new launches – Pink Crunchy Vegetables and Crunchy Vegetables – combine the brand's famed sweet and tangy flavour profile with mustard seeds.

The vegetables within have been expertly chosen for their crunch, and inlcude cornichons, red pepper, carrot slices, cauliflower florets and baby silverskin onions.

The ingredients of both new additions to the range have been fermented for a minimum of four weeks to build a rounded flavour, appealing to the growing number of consumers interested in the health benefits provided by fermented foods.

Matthew Moyes, marketing controller at Empire Bespoke Foods, said, "As leaders in the gherkin segment, which is the largest and fastest growing segment of all pickles – we have a pipeline of exciting new products that not only bring news to the category, but also modernise it. From Toluna studies, we know our Crunchy Vegetables appeal to a younger, food engaged consumer – who is looking for something that can accompany multiple dishes. With our new Crunchy Vegetables we are looking to bring life, colour and modernity to the pickles aisle. Consumers are not only looking for new flavour profiles, but new and improved options for old favourites."

empirebespokefoods.com



Taste of Japan en route to UK cocktail cabinets

A new range of artisan spirits showcasing quality distillation and classic Japanese flavours has been launched by The Wasabi Company in collaboration with English Spirit Distillery.

There are four products in the Spirit of Japan range: Sansho Spiced Rum, Shiso Gin, Wasabi Vodka and Yuzucello, all of which are ideal for serving neat, served with a mixer or highlighted within a cocktail.

The Spirit of Japan is available in individual 50cl bottles and a 4 x 5cl gift set.

Jon Old, founder of The Wasabi Company, said, "The Spirit of Japan range brings real Japanese flavours to English palates like never before in a stunning selection of four artisan spirits. They reflect the current interest there is in fine crafted English spirits and the broader, consumer trend for Japanese food and flavours. We predict they will appeal to customers looking for something sophisticated and a little different."

thewasabicompany.co.uk

New heritage breads from Bertinet Bakery

Bertinet Bakery has launched three new 'Real Bread'-labelled sliced sourdough loaves, made with nothing but flour, water, seeds and a touch of sea salt.

The three new variants – Malted Wheat, Seeded and White – are made using natural heritage grain flours including barley, emmer, spelt and wheat, and provide discerning bread consumers with a light and sweetly tangy taste as well as an option which is naturally richer in fibre, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals.

Jenna Hope, registered nutritionist, said, "Bertinet Bakery Sliced Sourdough loaves are a perfect addition to your daily diet with emmer, spelt and barley flours increasing protein and fibre in the loaves, which slows down the release of sugar into the blood stream, helping you feel fuller for longer."

bertinetbakery.com



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THIRST QUENCHERS

Think innovative, delicious and nutrient-rich to satisfy your customers' desire for new this summer

COMMENTATORS



IMME ERMGASSEN
BOTIVO



MICHAEL DALLAWAY
RENT A CHERRY TREE



NICOLA CANNON
BROADLAND DRINKS



PAUL STEVENSON
LUSCOMBE



TAHI GRANT-STURGIS
JAMU WILD WATER

A icture the scene: you're in a back garden in summer, with the smell of freshly-mown grass mingling with the aromas of barbecues, herb-flecked salads and sun cream. But something's missing, right? Correct – no summer's day is complete without a few good glugs of a refreshing, potentially sparkling, beverage to celebrate the season's bounty and (hopefully) glorious sunshine. Thankfully, nature delivers on the flavour front every year, meaning that there's plenty of summer-suitable drinks ready to be snapped up and enjoyed by thirsty shoppers.

Best of British

As retailers and consumers alike warm up to what's sure to be a showstopper of a summer thanks to the coronation of King Charles III, 'best of British' is on the menu for many. Not only has Luscombe, the multi award-winning Devon-based producer of luxury soft drinks since 1975, not to mention Royal Warrant-holder, released a special edition sparkler to celebrate the occasion – Rose & Cherry Bubbly – but their range has long been a favourite with shoppers seeking finely crafted refreshment. "Whether it's a picnic at the beach, barbecue with friends or sunset suppers in the garden, Luscombe's range of soft drinks, juices, crushes, ginger beers, bubblies and tonics are the very essence of summer – I always think that every occasion is elevated with a Luscombe to accompany you," begins Paul Stevenson, director at Luscombe.

With a range encompassing fruit juices, crushes, bubbles, ginger beers and tonic waters, at Luscombe there's something to suit everyone at a seasonal gathering – from children fancying sweet refreshment to adults craving a spirit brought to life with a top-notch mixer. Ultimately, it all comes down to quality; a matter of paramount importance to independent retailers and their customers. "Everything centres around exceptional taste and being absolutely true and honest in sourcing and respecting the finest ingredients, and not adding any nasty chemicals. The ingredients we use make us stand out from the very beginning – because we start with the best, it makes sense that with our unique, small-batch, production methods and blending skill, we end up with the best products."

The business's reputation has thrived on this attention to detail. "Founder and owner of Luscombe, Gabriel David, has become renowned for his pursuit of perfection and no-compromise approach to creating our sophisticated range of drinks – and the team at Luscombe are all advocates of his vision," explains Paul. "Gabriel takes great pride in the fact that all of Luscombe's drinks are made from the very finest, gently pressed organic ingredients, creating great tasting, premium drinks."

Functional flavour

A relatively new development in the quality summer drinks forum is functionality – a mode by which drinks give rather than taking away, and are filled with nutritional benefits and simple ingredients lists as opposed to excess sugar and additives. "Underpinned by a rise in 'holistic health' and 'food as medicine', consumers are becoming increasingly interested in drinks that offer functional ingredients," explains Tahi Grant-Sturgis, founder of Jamu Wild Water – a range of canned beverages which contain 5g of chicory root inulin, a prebiotic plant fibre, in order to rebalance the digestive system and improve general health and wellbeing. "With greater awareness around gut health and its strong link to other body systems including cognition, immune function and inflammation, many consumers are seeking prebiotics." The next big thing in functional drinks is digestive health, says Tahi, quoting Kerry Taste & Nutrition, and this is set to tick the boxes of smart shoppers looking for added value in the items they buy. "With the cost of living being what it is, consumers are only going to spend on products that offer some sort of value – prebiotic drinks may well be an expense consumers will justify because of the attributed benefits. I think this is a wonderful way to reconnect with what we eat, how we live, and consider how

TOP SUMMER SELLERS



Nicola Cannon, senior brand manager at Broadland Drinks, shares her predictions for the warmer months ahead

Wine will continue to be a go-to drink for consumers over the summer months as it is throughout the rest of the year, but we expect rosé to have its usual surge in popularity as the sun shines.

The long-term moderation trend will continue to drive growth in 'low and no' drinks. Lower strength drinks have a natural fit with summer drinking occasions, and we expect to see growth in wine styles which have lower than average ABV over this summer and beyond, while alcohol-free wine will continue to see growth for those occasions where consumers want to avoid alcohol altogether. At Broadland Drinks we are continuing to work hard on this area, and our 'light and easy drinking' Three Mills caters for consumers who want both low and no alcohol options.

Above all else, with the ongoing pressures on household budgets, we expect to see people saving money by socialising at home or on the go, rather than meeting up in pubs, bars or restaurants. As a result, there will be demand for drinks which offer value for money and convenience, and which can also offer some of the interest and variety that might be found on a bar's drinks menu, with inspiration coming from crossover drinks like Twistea, and from flavour combinations that take inspiration from cocktail bars and specialist mixologists.

> "We expect rosé to have its usual surge in popularity as the sun shines"





we can support our body in much the same way as our ancestors did, through food."

With a three-strong range of drinks to choose from: Sparkling Lemon, with Dandelion & Nettle extracts; Blood Orange, with Echinacea extract; and Raspberry, with Marshmallow Root & Elderberry extracts, Jamu Wild Water is in prime position to cater to the growing consumer thirst for better-for-you refreshment.

Botivo is another breakthrough drinks producer making waves in the sector. Inspired by the power of botanicals and a desire to create a drink that would uniquely bring these flavours to the fore – more of a challenge than you might think – founder Imme Ermgassen has made a stand-out beverage that can be enjoyed in a myriad of ways. "We have seen a growing interest in lo/no drinks and harnessing botanical flavours to deepen flavours, but it is difficult to achieve complexity that people are looking for if you are just buying botanical flavourings and essentially adding them to water. We wanted to use fresh ingredients and we were after a base that would really amplify the botanical flavour nuances," she begins. "So we took five fresh botanicals – thyme, rosemary, gentian, wormwood and orange zest – and infused them into a fermented apple base for several weeks, before being balanced out with honey. Using a variety of botanicals like this gives the drink a multilayered and complex taste experience. It effectively starts off life as alcohol, so is the perfect medium for the flavours. It's citrus, herbal and bittersweet at the same time, but is also light and refreshing for upcoming summer days."

Creating beverages using the very best ingredients is at the core of Rent A Cherry Tree's mission, too. The Kent-based fruit farmers, which producers 20 types of cherries, has brought a cherry juice to market which not only ticks the quality, provenance and flavour boxes, but also offers up some potentially surprising health credentials. "Our cherry juice is packed full of five different types of antioxidants, vitamin C, iron and nutrients, which are known for their health-giving properties and can aid with the inflammation associated with arthritis. Cherry juice is also a really effective natural remedy for gout," explains Michael Dallaway, who runs the business. Made using wonky cherries and proudly no added sweetness so that the natural tang of the cherries shines through, the drink "is unbelievably refreshing and thirst quenching on a summer's day," says Michael. "Served simply with crushed ice it really is the taste of summer in one glass."

Mix it up

As the appetite for personalisation grows across all sectors of the British marketplace, it can seem a daunting task to cater to every customer's whim. Thankfully, there's a whole host of refreshing mixers on the market to help satisfy demand. According to studies by Grand View Research, the cocktail industry is now a billion-pound industry seeing 13.9% growth year-on-year, and with mixers playing a vital role in the DIY cocktails-at-home movement we saw boom during the Covid-19 lockdowns, they're well worth doing right.

Let's Mix! is a new player on the scene, offering a unique combination of convenience, personalisation and classic flavours. According to co-founder and sales director Alex Bath, who runs the business with his brother Daniel, the thirst is only getting stronger for personalisation and ease of use. "Versatility is extremely important in modern

> "Convenient and delicious, easily recyclable and enjoyed by all ages, canned drinks tick a lot of boxes for summer-sipping occasions"

CASH IN ON LOW/NO



Laura Willoughby, founder of Club Soda, shares her favourite low/no thirst quenchers for the summer season

WHAT IS TRENDING IN LOW/NO?

The sales of alcohol-free wine have surged to unprecedented levels in the UK lately. All brands have perfected a great-tasting non-alcoholic still wine to complement their already fantastic range of sparkling wines. The new Thomson & Scott Noughty Rosé is wowing our customers right now or try the new offering from France, Le Moderato. You can surprise your regulars with alternatives like REAL Drinks Sparkling Tea or Bemuse alcohol-free mead, particularly their wild raspberry which is summer in a can! Drinks that contain functional and mood-enhancing ingredients are also hot this year, with exciting offerings such as Sentia's GABA-enhancing spirits and Three Spirit's mood-boosting elixirs. We can't stock them fast enough! But never underestimate the power of beer. It is still a growing category in alcohol-free and is an easy fridge filler.

WHAT ALCOHOL-FREE DRINKS SHOULD SPECIALITY RETAILERS BE STOCKING FOR SUMMER?

Grab some alcohol-free ciders like Maiden Mill or Sassy. They are great for a lunchtime addition to a sandwich in the park, and they are an easy option for a garden get-together. Over the summer months, you would think that all drinks only came in a canned, ready-to-drink format. Luckily, alcohol-free brands have got you covered. There are easy-to-drink simple serves from Lyre's and Sea Arch, as well as canned cocktails. Keep an eye out for the new, award-winning Pina Colada from Caleño. Don't forget sparkling or rosé wines as well! There are lots of new offerings out there like Le Moderato and Oddbird – find one you love and then get it in for your customers.

WHAT MAKES LOW/NO GREAT FOR THE SUMMER SEASON?

People want to enjoy the great outdoors, but just like when they go out to the pub, they want something that they feel adds to the party atmosphere without compromising on taste. It's a basic fact that if alcohol sales boom in summer, the demand for alcohol-free zooms up alongside it. The great moderation lifestyle is showing no signs of slowing, so make sure you have drinks that suit daytimes and the start of the week. Plus switching in the odd alcohol-free drink on a sunny day helps people manage the heady heat and drink combo that means we often drink more than we intend! You should be as proud of your range of alcohol-free drinks as you are your alcoholic offering, and the sales will follow your enthusiasm.



society, due to the fact we live in an increasingly consumerist culture. People are always looking for a new thing or a new interesting way of doing things. Our products are versatile by their very nature, they are a mixer meaning we are providing one part of the cocktail equation."

Despite the Let's Mix! range covering all classic cocktail bases – margerita, sours, pornstar martini, garden martini, cosmopolitan and a range of fruity daiquiris – the alcohol isn't built-in; drinkers can choose whether to add a non-alcoholic soda or spirit to their own drinks. "Due to the fact we leave the addition of alcohol to the consumer, they are allowed to choose their favourite brand of Tequila to mix their Margs, or they can add a non-alcoholic alcohol to make mocktails with it. They can shake the mango daiquiri with basil, serve their Garden Martini long, with ice and soda, the possibilities are endless."

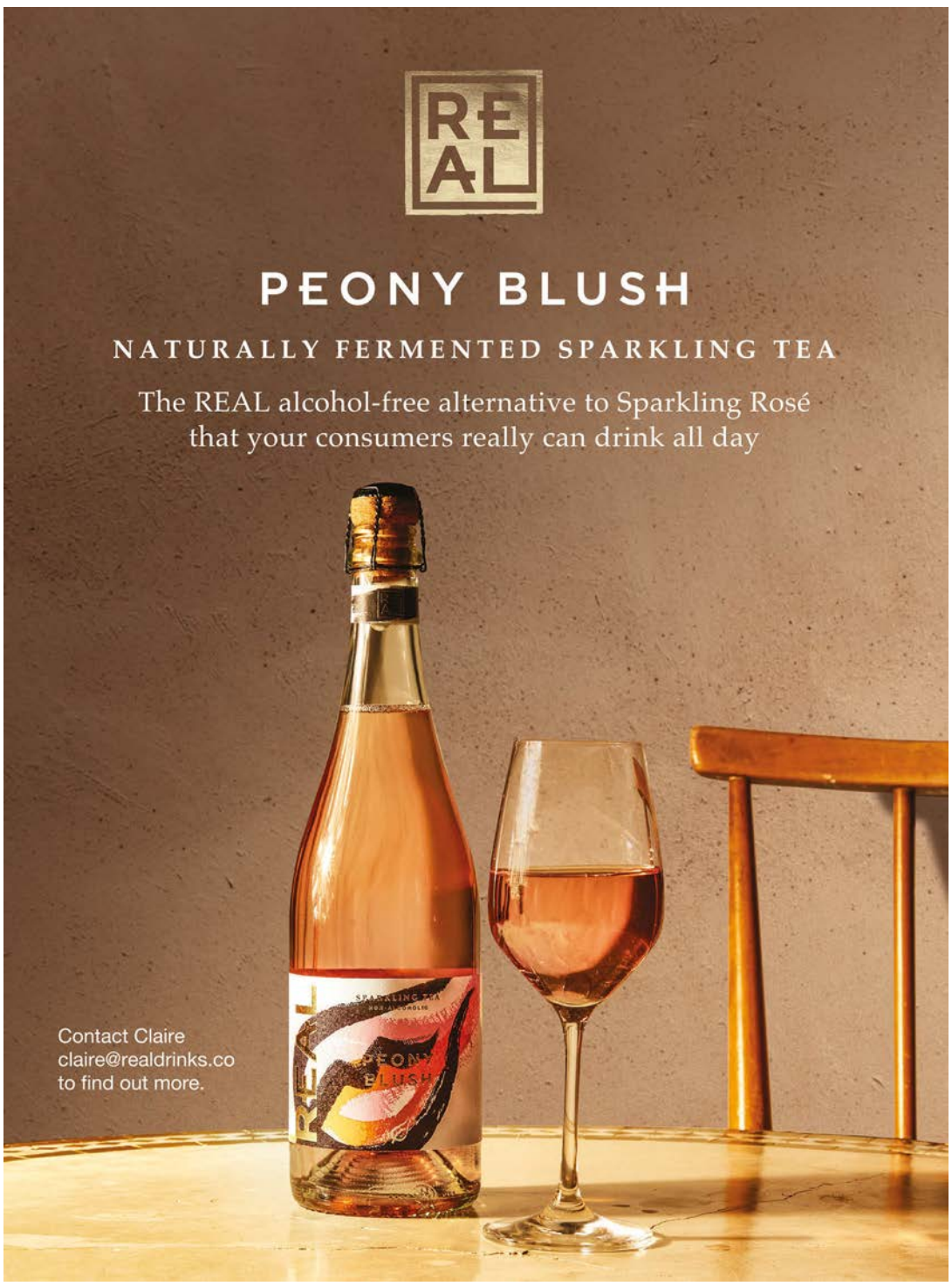
Innovation on-the-go

The canned drink format is already well-known and loved in the fine drink sphere, and it's not for nothing that quality counterparts to conventional canned soft drinks are relishing their time in the spotlight – convenient and delicious, easily recyclable and enjoyed by all ages, they tick a lot of boxes for summer-sipping occasions.

Innovation is rife, too, much to the delight of adventurous foodies. For example, Broadland Drinks has recently introduced its new product Twistea: a semi-sparkling, flavoured alcoholic tea. "It is very popular in the US but still new to the growing RTD category in the UK. In fact, we like to think we are putting the 'tea' into RTD, offering something unique to a category that can lack differentiation," begins Nicola Cannon, senior brand manager at Broadland Drinks. "And of course, with its convenient format, fun design, and being vegan, gluten-free, low in sugar and less than 90 calories per can, it also meets those key consumer purchase drivers as well."

Despite its reputation for being packed full of overly-sweetened, high-sugar drinks, there is sizeable consumer demand for the RTD category to offer something more attuned to mature palates. "Our research highlighted growing consumer demand for a more mature, bitter flavour profile, and we worked hard to find the right flavour combinations to complement our tea base. Using tea leaves from a small family run plantation in Malawi, our tea is cold brewed over 24 hours then fused with 100% natural, grown-up fruity flavours. The result is a great tasting alcoholic tea with a twist that, perhaps unsurprisingly, appeals most to tea lovers and consumers who already drink iced tea or fruit, herbal or speciality tea blends."

> "Underpinned by a rise in 'holisitc health' and 'food as medicine', consumers are becoming increasingly interested in drinks that offer functional ingredients"



2023 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



REAL DRINKS PEONY BLUSH
A fine rosé sparkling tea, made using White Peony tea, naturally fermented to produce a non-alcoholic drink which is full of flavour and complexity.
realdrinks.co



LUSCOMBE WILD ELDERFLOWER BUBBLY
Elderflowers hand-picked in the June sunshine infuse this classic drink. The gentle sparkle lifts the floral notes for an elegant taste.
luscombe.co.uk



RENT A CHERRY TREE CHERRY JUICE
Naturally tangy, sweet and refreshing. Each litre of juice contains approximately 3kg of pressed cherries.
rentacherrytree.co.uk



BOTIVO
Botivo is a refreshing, handmade fermented drink that combines five citrus, bittersweet and aromatic botanicals.
botivodrinks.com



BELVOIR PINK LADY APPLE JUICE
A 100% natural sparkling juice made from Pink Lady® apples with no added sugar. Perfect chilled over ice for a naturally refreshing drink.
belvoirfarm.co.uk



CAWSTON PRESS SPARKLING RHUBARB
This lightly sparkling rhubarb lemonade uses 100% pure pressed juice to create a deliciously tart, moreish and refreshing drink.
cawstonpress.com



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



EVERLEAF MOUNTAIN
A vibrant blend of 12 sustainably sourced botanicals including cherry blossom, rosehip and strawberry.
everleafdrinks.com



BRECKLAND ORCHARD PEAR & ELDERFLOWER
A delightful fruity twist on an elderflower pressé, from a family-owned company.
brecklandorchard.co.uk



JAMU WILD WATER BLOOD ORANGE
A zesty, bright and delicious tasting soft drink, infused with echinacea to support immunity and help to relieve symptoms of cold and flu.
jamuwildwater.co.uk

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CENTRE



Excite your customers' taste buds with these flavour-packed picks for alfresco dining

1 BILADI FOODS
TAHINI

The fusing of spicy Arabic flavours with the colours and textures of Mediterranean cuisine is the essence of Baladi's vision. The launch range of three Great Taste Gold Star-winning flavoured Tahini and Za'atar and Olive Oil sauces are just the beginning from a brand promising to bring truly authentic Lebanese flavours to the UK.
biladifoods.com

2 HAWKSHEAD RELISH
HOT BEETROOT KETCHUP

One of Hawkshead Relish's newer sauces is their vibrant Hot Beetroot Ketchup. Ideal for pairing with a BBQ or mixing with olive oil for a quick salad dressing. The combination of rich beetroot, horseradish and a hint of chilli which certainly packs a punch is perfect for summer! Also featured are the Posh Pickle Sauce and Black Garlic Ketchup.
hawksheadrelish.com

3 6 O'CLOCK GIN
READY TO DRINK CANS

The award-winning ready-to-drink range from 6 O'clock Gin is the ideal way to enjoy a G&T al fresco. Available as a classic London Dry G&T; a spicier Exotic Orange G&T; a moreish Mango, Ginger & Lime G&T; and a fruity Damson Gin with Ginger – a great alternative to tonic. Perfect for picnics, or wherever the spirit takes you!
6oclockgin.com



4 FLOWER & WHITE MERINGUES

Flower & White, the well-known makers and innovators of award-winning meringues, proudly introduce their brand-new look for their bestselling giant Meringue Clouds. Handcrafted using only the finest ingredients: free-range eggs, natural flavours, natural colours and Callebaut chocolate. Slow baked to a traditional Swiss recipe, they're naturally gluten-free, low fat and suitable for vegetarians.
flowerandwhite.co.uk

5 ROWCLIFFE CLEMENCY HALL CHEESES

The Clemency Hall range brings quality and value to the independent retailer with pre-packed artisan cheese that is full of character and made by local producers. The selection of pre-cut cheeses provides the opportunity to still offer speciality and premium products. Featured are the Victorious Vintage and Ka Pow Chilli truckles, and Le Crêt Gruyère AOP.
rowcliffe.co.uk

6 DICKINSON & MORRIS MELTON MOWBRAY PORK PIE

The mouth-watering, award-winning Dickinson & Morris Melton Mowbray Pork Pie is made with 100% British, outdoor-bred pork shoulder, perfectly seasoned with a unique blend of white pepper, encased in a rich, hot water crust pastry. The perfect match for many occasions, these pork pies are great for much more than the Great British summer.
porkpie.co.uk

7 BELVOIR FARM SPARKLING ELDERFLOWER

Belvoir Farm Sparkling Elderflower is made using a traditional family recipe blending hand-picked elderflowers with lemon juice and pure spring water for a delicately refreshing taste. Alternatively, mix with white wine for a spritzer or use as a mixer with vodka or gin.
belvoirfarm.co.uk

COMMENTATORS



CRAIG ROBERTS
FARMER COPLEYS



MARIA WHITEHEAD
HAWKSHEAD RELISH



JACK READ
FUTURE FARM



GLEN BURROWS
ETHICAL BUTCHER



SELLING THE GREAT BRITISH BARBECUE



We explore what Brits are seeking for their summer barbecues in 2023, and how fine food retailers can provide quality and value

As a staple in every Brit's diet, barbecue-ready food is always a winner for the summer months. But what are 2023's consumers looking for to impress friends and family at their BBQs?

Of course, fine food retailers are always in a good position to cater to foodie occasions, and the Great British BBQ is no exception.

According to Craig Roberts, head butcher at Farmer Copleys, "As fine food retailers, we can cater to consumer demand by having both amazing produce and amazing colleagues that can understand what our customers want when the BBQ weather does arrive and plan accordingly.

"Communication with our visitors can help gauge trends and demands for the year. From speaking with them this year, we've seen a trend for cooking low and slow which gives our butchers a chance to upsell things like flat briskets or Boston butts and again offer recipes, ideas and upsells to enhance their shopping experience and really show off in front of the grill."

As a spokesperson from Daylesford tells *Speciality Food*, "Some of the trends we have picked up on this year so far are low and slow cooking, taking their time to cook meat at a low temperature over a long period of time, while others are embracing plant-based diets, choosing predominantly vegetarian and vegan dishes for their barbecue sessions."

The sustainability factor

With food inflation at almost 20% in April, consumers are thinking more carefully about where their money is going in 2023.

They are choosing to spend money on the right things, and continue to be on a trajectory that values sustainability. Their food choices are no exception. Indeed, when it comes to choosing meat products for the Great British barbecue, ethical and environmental credentials are extremely important.

As Glen Burrows, founder of The Ethical Butcher, explains, "Recently, consumers are increasingly becoming interested in ethical and sustainable options that prioritise animal welfare and environmental sustainability.

"Retailers should prioritise ethical and sustainable practices in their product selection and sourcing, such as partnering with suppliers that prioritise sustainable and ethical farming practices."

In fact, The Ethical Butcher uses QR codes to allow customers to see the sustainability journey of the product from farm to fork.

"We buy direct from farmers, visit each farm and make a film about how the animals are raised, what regenerative methods are employed and where they are, we then link this information to the product with a QR code which is included on the thermal print label on each product," he explains.

This is something that Daylesford Organic also highly prioritises. Their spokesperson told *Speciality Food*, "Combining excellent provenance and superlative eating quality, our premium steaks are sourced from the beef herds raised on our organic, regenerative farms in the Cotswolds and Staffordshire.

"We even built our own organic abattoir to ensure the highest welfare and reduction of food miles. All our animals are certified organic by the Soil Association, which carries our rigorous assessments and sets the highest standards of animal welfare in Europe. We choose to rear native breeds that thrive on a grass-fed diet in an organic farming system, roaming our rich pasture in the warmer months and eating silage and forage in the winter."

When it comes to communicating these credentials to customers, Glen suggests, "Retailers can leverage social media and other marketing channels to promote their ethical and sustainable products and practices and collaborate with like-minded brands and organisations to further promote their values."

Going meat-free

As fine food retailers know well, consumers have diverse tastes, so retailers should offer a range of BBQ products that cater to different dietary preferences and flavour profiles. In addition to choosing more sustainably sourced animal products for the grill, consumers are ditching meat altogether in favour of plant-based alternatives.

As Jack Read, sales director at vegan meat producer Future Farm, explains, "With the move toward people looking to live more sustainably, it's no surprise that plant-based foods will be a big BBQ trend this season.

"A recent survey by Waitrose indicates that 59% of adults in the UK are decreasing their meat consumption, and this inclination is mirrored in BBQs with a Tesco survey further revealing that 35% of individuals aim to prepare vegetarian or vegan meals on their BBQ in 2023."

But customers will be looking beyond the tired bean burger this summer. They want to indulge in the savoury, juicy taste of a meat burger while enjoying the benefits of a plant-based diet, according to Jack, and Future Farm's new Future Burger 4.0 is "designed to cater to all cooking preferences, with the ability to emulate rare, medium, and well-done cooking points, making it the perfect choice for grilling on a BBQ."

When stocking up on barbecue products, Jack adds, "This could include plant-based options, a range of different flavours, and unique twists on classic BBQ items. We recently conducted a study which showed 80% of consumers have tried plant-based meats, highlighting the need for independent fine food retailers to stock a variety of meat substitutes to supply the demand."

Glen agrees, "Independent fine food retailers can ensure they are catering for the demand this BBQ season by offering a diverse range of high-quality products from regenerative producers which can include both meat and plant-based options, as well as a variety of sides and accompaniments."

> "With the move toward people looking to live more sustainably, it's no surprise that plant-based foods will be a big BBQ trend this season"



Offering that something extra

Consumers don't visit fine food retailers for any old beef burger, they specifically visit them for the high quality and extra experience they offer.

As Craig tells *Speciality Food*, "Our customers look for the quality in our meat and the experience from our butchery team. We provide this to them by sourcing the highest quality, local produce and using it to create amazing BBQ products and passing on our knowledge to them too.

"This can be anything from cooking recommendations to showing them the best way to make a cracking marinade for a butterflied leg of lamb or an awesome sauce to go with their grass-fed steak."

Indeed, many consumers are looking for guidance on how to grill and prepare barbecue items. Jack suggests, "Retailers can provide education and inspiration by offering cooking classes, hosting tastings, and providing recipe ideas and tips."

This level of service and communication is something the multiples simply cannot provide. "I think people can be apprehensive to invest in something new unless they know they can cook it properly. This is where our team come into their own and are that reassuring figure to make sure their BBQ is a success," Craig adds.

One low-maintenance way to provide guidance is through in-store displays. According to Maria Whitehead, director at Hawkshead Relish, "A summer BBQ display is a must, customers really respond to instruction and suggestions so creating a display that includes anything BBQ season with plenty of choice is ideal."

With budgets tight, 2023 is the year of multi-use and getting the most out of ingredients, leading to consumers being more experimental to personalise their meals.

"We have some great summer recipes featured in our Embellish With Relish cookbook, which is based on using our sauces, chutneys and preserves in different ways to enhance dishes and impress family and friends in the process", she adds.

Using your USPs as fine food retailers will certainly do well this BBQ season, so pay close attention to what your customers are looking for and stay reactive to changing tastes.

> "We source the highest quality, local produce and use it to create amazing BBQ products and pass on our knowledge too"

RETAILER INSIGHT

Two fine food retailers share their best-selling BBQ products for summer 2023

DAYLESFORD ORGANIC

Each year, our best-selling products for BBQ season range from organic steaks, burgers and marinated meats to seasonal vegetables, salads and condiments. To meet demand, we introduced our Home Grilling Boxes which come in two sizes and include a variety of our best-selling BBQ meats, sauces and burger buns. In addition to fresh produce, our portable BBQ is a best-seller each summer.

FARMER COPLEYS

Our best-sellers are ones you'd expect to see such as sausages, kebabs and burgers, along with sirloin and ribeye steaks. I think this will always be the case as they are quintessential to the Great British BBQ, although there is an obvious increase in customers speaking with our butchers and taking home something a little more adventurous, alongside the staples of the BBQ.

STOCK CHECK

2023 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



TRACKLEMENTS MUSTARD KETCHUP

Made with a combination of wholegrain and smooth mustards and a measure of sugar and spices for perfect balance, this is a delicious baste for steaks, sausages and chops.

tracklements.co.uk



HAWKSHEAD RELISH POSH PICKLE SAUCE

This twist on a burger relish is packed with gherkins, dill and onions, seasoned and spiced to create a lovely soft yet moreish sauce that is great to bring out at the BBQ.

hawksheadrelish.com



FUTURE FARM SAUSAGES

Whether grilled or sizzled in a pan, these plant-based sausages deliver the snappy outside and juicy inside you can't get enough of.

futurefarm.io



MASH DIRECT HOME STYLE COLESLAW

A crunchy combination of white and red cabbage with carrot and spring onion in a traditional mayonnaise.

mashdirect.com



STOKES BLOODY MARY KETCHUP

A classic tomato ketchup made with a dash of real vodka and a splash of Worcestershire sauce for a touch of spice.

stokessauces.co.uk



POTTS' BBQ MARINATING BAG BOURBON & CHIPOTLE CHILLI

This convenient BBQ with Bourbon and Chipotle Chilli marinade in a re-sealable bag is perfect for beef steaks or chicken.

pottspartnership.co.uk



BARRIES MAYO SMOKED PAPRIKA

Egg-free and vegan, this creamy Smoked Paprika mayonnaise boasts a rich smoky flavour that is great for the grill.

barriesonline.com



MIAMI FOODS CLASSIC BURGERS

These plant-based burger patties are made using GMO-free European-sourced soya beans for a meat-free BBQ experience.

miamifoods.co



SAUCE SHOP BURGER SAUCE

Take your burgers to the next level with this tangy, smoky flavour explosion that combines Sauce Shop's Tomato Ketchup, Carolina Gold and creamy mayo.

sauceshop.co



HUNTER & GATHER UNSWEETENED BARBECUE SAUCE

Add a delicious BBQ flavour to any dish with this Barbecue Sauce that delivers a sweet, smoky edge using all-natural ingredients.

hunterandgatherfoods.com



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PETER'S YARD



HOW TO SELL CHEESE IN SUMMER 2023

With warmer weather and long sunny days ahead, it's time to curate your summer cheese selections

Communal occasions such as picnics and BBQs can be the perfect upsell for top-quality artisan cheeses that make time together special, so it's worth investing time into it. We spoke to three cheesemongers about the key considerations that need to be addressed.

A summer selection

As the sun peeks through the clouds and the air gets more humid, cheesemongers and retailers need to reconsider their counter selections to cater for the season ahead.

As Fraser MacLellan, owner of Froth & Rind, explains, "We adjust our cheese selection for the summer months and try to bring in lighter and fresher cheeses. We find that things like Raclette and other melting cheeses sell less in the summer, as do a lot of blues and some harder cheeses.

"Mozzarella and Burrata are good additions to the counter for the summer as they work well in plenty of summer dishes. Some other cheeses that work well in summery salads are soft goats' cheeses and Comté, and we also promote softer Brie-style cheeses in our sandwiches.

Eleonore Deneuve, owner of Cheezelo, agrees. "I usually vary the type of cheeses from hard cheeses to soft and fresh cheeses, prioritising goat and ewe milk cheeses too. Cheeses that are also lower in fat are great to have on salads or with vegetables. Goat and ewe cheeses are particularly refreshing due to their acidity; similarly, Burrata, Mozzarella di Buffalo and Feta are a must-have on warmer days."

Summer brings the opportunity to try out different cheeses to your regular stocks. As Rory Mellis, director at I.J. Mellis, explains, "During summer it is important to showcase the fresher cheeses that are on offer or anything that is lighter and can be used for salads or cooking. I would always recommend trying four or five young acidic cheeses over summer."

The picnic and BBQ opportunity

Of course, summer is the season for getting outside and enjoying picnics and barbecues. As cheese and accompaniments are often big focuses of these foodie occasions, cheesemongers have plenty of opportunity to cash in.

Fraser offers picnic boxes for the summer months, in which, "We include some wine, cheese, olives and other snacks. This is a popular gift and we often find people sending it to friends or family over the summer."

But choosing what to put in your picnic boxes requires serious consideration. As Rory explains, "It brings opportunities to highlight cheeses that go well with picnics and items that people would like to take away outside the shop for on-the-move.

"There are a lot of opportunities for creating picnic and BBQ packages, so if you could add fresh cheese to a kit or package that goes well then people are more inclined to try a cheese that way.

"Use promotions to get people to try different cheeses and bundle them together in an affordable way so people can take them away and not have to think about what's good for a picnic. In picnic selections, choose fresh cheeses but also something like a really good Cheddar and cooking cheeses.

"Use the warmer weather to your advantage and get outside to do outdoor tastings. You engage with your customers, get to taste cheeses that people don't normally buy, and you can catch people in a good mood if it's nice weather."

Eleonore agrees. "I'd recommend having a couple of tastings and variations of cheeses based on the weather but focusing on health benefits too. Trial any cheeses that would be nice with salads or even fruits. For example, highlighting the Keto diet is great as cheeses are usually recommended."

The tourism factor

The summer also brings tourists from far and wide to visit towns and cities across the UK. This means a new audience passing by your cheese shop and the potential to attract new customers.

For Rory, summer brings the notorious Edinburgh Fringe festival and crowds of visitors to the city. "A lot of people are on holiday for festivals, so champion as much local cheese as you can and showcase what is unique to you.

"For the Fringe, we promote Scottish cheese because it's one of the few opportunities where we get a lot of foreign travellers and tourists and it's a good period of the year where we're able to showcase the Scottish cheeses we really do well. Try to show as much local as possible and get people involved in British cheese with all the footfall passing your door."

> "Use the warmer weather to your advantage and get outside to do outdoor tastings. You engage with your customers, get to taste cheeses that people don't normally buy, and you can catch people in a good mood if it's nice weather"

But down in London, it's all about boosting sales to the customers who are getting out of the big smoke. "With lots of people going on holiday in the summer, things are inevitably quieter so we're trying to work out ways for people to comfortably take cheese on holiday with them if they're holidaying in the UK. This is mostly with regulars when we're chatting about holidays.

"We jokingly suggest there might not be a cheese shop where they are going on holiday and suggest they buy some to take with them. For cheese lovers, the thought of two weeks without cheese can be surprisingly scary!"



PETER'S YARD

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JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

Being an independent business is great. I fondly remember how much fun we had drawing pictures of how the company logo should look. Prior to opening the shop I had a lot of research to do, including spending days researching British cheesemakers.

This month's column is about our journey and how we have evolved. I will also cover how I deal with copycat businesses that use your model and ideas.

In 2010, No2 Pound Street opened its doors as a specialist wine shop, British artisan cheesemonger and delicatessen. As you will learn we went to great lengths to ensure that the shop was on point.

The shop itself used to be an old wine shop, so was the perfect place to include cheese and deli produce. We were careful to check the vicinity for other shops doing similar and found nothing. We had a blank canvas and were excited to get drawing.

So our first stop was France. Why? Well, the French are brilliant cheesemakers and have exceptional wine. Paris was calling me as well as a rugby game at The Stade De France. After checking into our hotel, my friend and I found a lovely little wine shop in the heart of Paris. The wine shop was small with a lovely selection of French wines. The list was curated perfectly.

We were very thirsty and hungry after our journey and were pleased to learn that you could enjoy wine in the shop. We picked a lovely wine from the Alsace and presented it to the shopkeeper. I asked if she had a cold one – she said no but I can chill it in four minutes. The lovely lady then placed the wine in le chiller and voila the wine was chilled.

I mentioned to the shopkeeper that we were famished and if she had any recommendations. "How about some cheese whilst you have your wine?" What a fabulous idea, we agreed. "Yes please." The lady then said, "I must pop over the road to the boulangerie and buy a baguette, do you mind waiting a moment?" – "Not at all madame." The bread arrived and Comté was cut and placed onto a beautiful French flowered China plate. She tore the bread and placed it on an old wooden board. We slurped our aromatic wine and chomped on the nutty and complex Comté we had placed on the crunchy warm baguette.

Of course, this was all research. When back home the vision and memory of the fabulous Parisian trip was still raw. So we planned a wine shop with a chunky wooden table (chandelier above). I rang several artisan British cheese producers and talked about our plans – none of which had been done in the UK at that point.

No2 opened as a wine shop and deli with seating and a bar counter to enjoy fabulous wines, cheese, charcuterie and freshly ground exceptional coffee. It was a winner. We were literally the talk of the town and quickly became the go-to venue for real foodies and wine lovers.

Back then we had 10 British territorial cheeses, now we have over 100. We have kept our food British which remains unique, and very much on point. Our business model has been copied several times. When others copy, continue to evolve your business. Move away from those that seem comfortable stealing your ideas. Be reassured that you are brilliant. Recently this happened in a place where we have traded for years. Deep breaths – you're better, much better!

Godminster unveils new look for 2023

Bruton-based organic Cheddar producer Godminster has revealed a new look for its range, inspired by the landscapes and legends of Wessex.



With its new motto 'Savour the spirit of Somerset', Godminster's rebrand features a new logo, packaging and product names, including mythical identities and colour schemes for each variety of cheese, to reposition the range to appeal to modern and curious cheese lovers.

The product range will now feature the original organic vintage Cheddar, renamed 'Bruton Beauty', in the classic burgundy wax; the Oak-Smoked 'Cheyney's Fortune'; Red Chilli 'Devil's Dance'; and the ever-popular Black Truffle 'Howling Hound', all in black wax and made using Godminster's tried and tested methods.

While bringing a fresh and colourful new look to the top of its waxed truckles, Godminster has also introduced a new belly band to its 200g round and heart-shaped cheeses. This new addition communicates Godminster's brand messaging to the consumer, even when stacked on higher shelves within the cheese fixture; an innovation that could prove to be a powerful tool in the sale of speciality cheese in the UK.

Jessica Kimber-Holloway, commercial and operations director at Godminster, explained, "We're delighted to be bringing our legendary truckles to life with a new look that has been designed to be the talk of the cheeseboard, wherever it may appear.

"Emphasising our intimate relationship with the countryside around us, our refreshed brand identity communicates the spirit of Somerset in a whole new way, while staying true to our core values and the heritage of the business, so it feels like the perfect vehicle to take Godminster forward for years to come. This launch heralds the beginning of a very exciting new chapter for Godminster and we're looking forward to bringing retailers and consumers along with us on our journey."

CHEESE FACT FILE...



CONNAGE CLAVA BRIE

- **Country of origin:** Scotland
- **Milk:** Cows'
- **Description:** Jill and Callum Clarke make this Scottish Brie-style cheese just outside of Inverness in Ardersier. This cheese has flavours of cabbage and cauliflower and gets punchier with age. Jill and Callum go above and beyond the standards for organic dairy farming and animal welfare, proving that happy cows make delicious cheese.

NEWS IN BRIEF

CHEDDAR CHEESE HIT BY INFLATION

The cost of British food staples such as cheese, white bread and porridge oats have soared – with the price of Cheddar, which accounts for roughly half of all cheese sales in the UK, increasing by an average 28.3%. In fact, the cost of one brand of Cheddar increased by 80% in one year. Overall food inflation continued to rise in March to 19.1%, up from 16.5% the month before.

ARTISAN CHEESES PULLED AFTER LISTERIA RISK

Dozens of types of artisan cheese have been urgently recalled over fears they could be contaminated with listeria. Food safety watchdogs have issued a warning over the potential risk posed by 26 products made by The Cambridge Food Company. They include Pitchfork Cheddar, T&T Stilton and Old Roan Wensleydale options, as well as the business's Alpen, Appleby Red Cheshire and Kirkhams Lancashire cheeses. The 26 cheeses had a closely genetically related strain of listeria that had also been found in samples of Baronet cheese in March.

SINGAPORE A KEY MARKET FOR CHEESE EXPORTERS

The Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) has identified Singapore as a key target market for UK exporters, with dairy shipments reaching 2,589 tonnes in 2022. In fact, cheese exports to Singapore increased in value to more than £3 million last year. AHDB's senior export manager for dairy, Lucy Randolph, commented, "With consumers who value high-quality products, Singapore is an important and growing market for our cheese and dairy exports. We look forward to raising the profile of our cheese to potential buyers from across Asia and building on these impressive export figures in the years ahead."



Parmigiano Reggiano sees uplift in exports despite Brexit

In 2022, the consumer turnover of PDO cheese Parmigiano Reggiano hit an all-time high of €2.9 billion vs. €2.7 billion in 2021, increasing by 6.9%. A new high was also reached in sales volumes in international markets, increasing by 3% and value at production with €1.8 billion vs. €1.71 billion in 2021.

Following Brexit, the UK imported 6,570 tons of Parmigiano Reggiano, an overall incline from 2019. In fact, the United Kingdom is Parmigiano Reggiano's fourth biggest export market.

The target market for Parmigiano Reggiano is becoming increasingly international, and with a total investment of €18.6 million allocated to market development in 2023, Parmigiano Reggiano is firmly on its way to becoming a global brand, ready to meet the challenges of extremely large markets.

The Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium is working to enhance its PDO's distinctiveness, providing consumers with more information on its characteristics: maturation, origin, the production process and taste, all elements that give it the opportunity to stand out from competitors.



Caerphilly cheese returns to Caerphilly town after three decades away

After almost 30 years since production died out in the South Wales town, Caerphilly cheese will be made in Caerphilly once again.

Traditional Caerphilly production largely died out after the Second World War, with just a small farm continuing production into the mid-90s. Now, almost 30 years on, two Welshmen are hoping to bring the crumbly cheese back to its spiritual home of Caerphilly.

Business partners Huw Rolands and Deian Thomas received a £1,000 grant from government-backed business Cywain to begin production again, using the recipe set out in the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) for Traditional Welsh Caerphilly and pasteurised organic cows' milk from Penuchadre Farm in Bridgend.

The team is hoping that the cheese will be perfected in time for the annual Caerphilly Big Cheese Festival and Abergavenny Food Festival, and is planning to sell it to delis, farm shops and visitor centres.

FIVE BEST-SELLING CHEESES



Vaik Lucas, store manager at The CheeseWorks, reveals his five best-selling cheeses and why they're so popular

The common factor for these top five cheeses is their high quality and affordable price. These cheeses are classics and are recommended as a strong base for any cheeseboard. Classic Stilton, creamy Gorgonzola, the king of Bries, a sweet and nutty alpine cheese and a Cheddar-style. They are complex, layered cheeses and huge crowd-pleasers for a reason!

1 **Colston Bassett** offers incredible flavours on the palate with a buttery/melt-in-the-mouth texture. It is a medium-strength blue for those who don't like stronger blues. This is a famous Stilton, and it is no surprise to see it at the top.

2 **Brie de Meaux** is the king of all Bries. A heart-warming cheese with mushroomy, earthy flavours and vegetable undertones under the rind. It is runny in texture but never runs away. It is flavourful but not overpowering. I think that the staff's love for this classic cheese plays a part in the ranking it has in the shop. When it is looked after well, it can suit any taste buds and impress any crowd.

3 **Mountain Gorgonzola** is without a doubt our most tempting and alluring cheese, as we serve it by spooning it straight into a tub. This is a mouth-watering experience to watch, as it demonstrates the cheese's gooey, oozy texture which few can resist.

4 **Schlossberger** should be a more known cheese. It is a Gruyère-style cheese made in the Emmental Valley in Switzerland. Our Schlossberger is aged for 23 months and has a silky texture with a fruity, nutty taste and beautiful crunchy calcium lactate crystals. When you've tried it once, you won't forget the name Schlossberger!

5 **Worcestershire Hop** has consistently been in our top five best-sellers for years. It is a semi-hard Cheddar-style cheese that is rolled in toasted hops. The hops give it a savoury, yeasty flavour which contrasts well with the natural sweetness of the cheese.

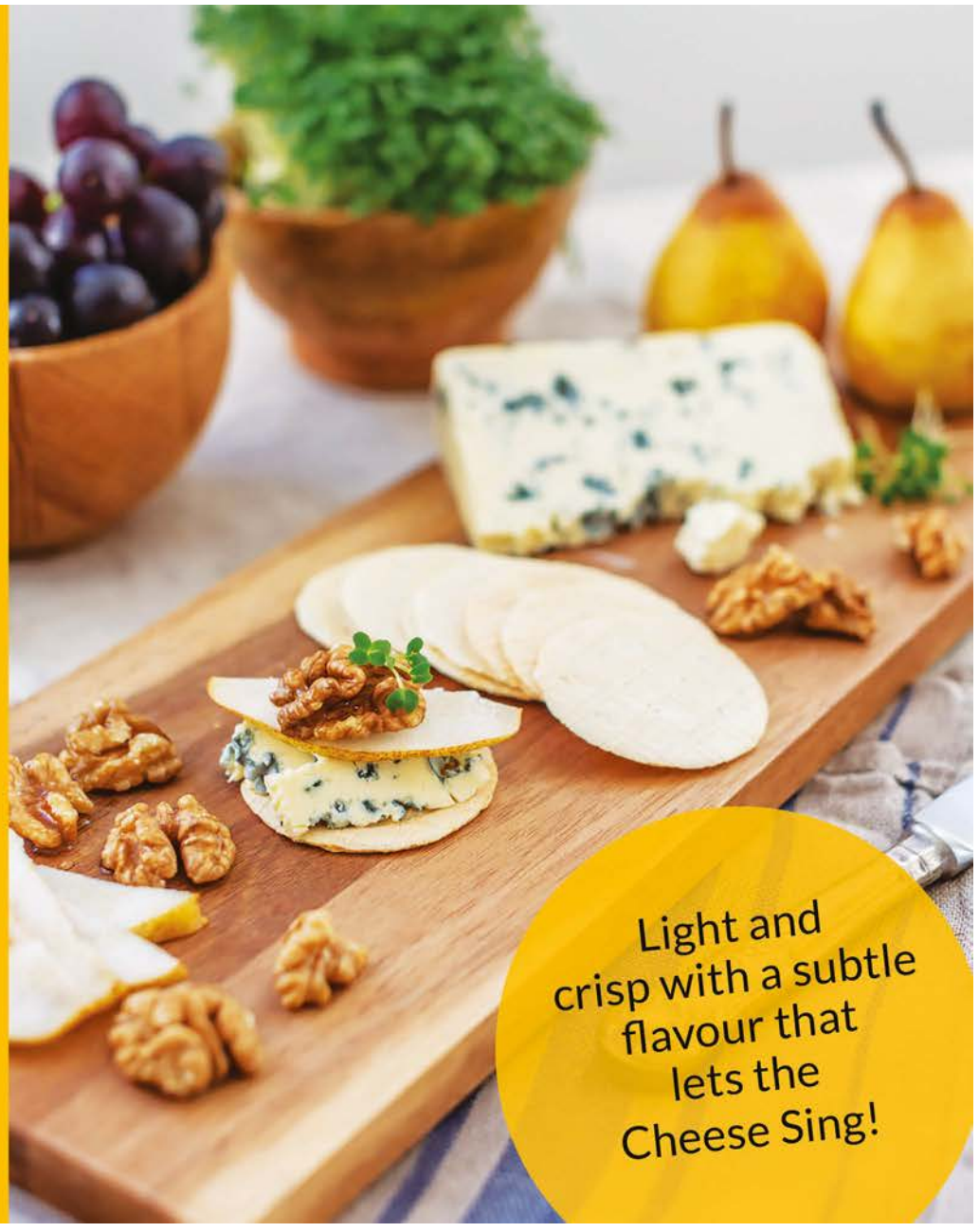
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FOCUS ON: SUMMER SNACKS

We explore why customers continue to value crisps in the cost-of-living crisis, and how to cash in on summer snacking

The snacking industry really comes into its own as the weather heats up and dark rainy days turn into long sunny adventures. Indeed, the on-the-go opportunity becomes more important than ever as shoppers forgo holidays for staycations and days out in the face of rising inflation.

Read on to find out how to offer quality and value with budgets being squeezed, and why customers continue to indulge in 'little luxuries'.

The cost-of-living effect

With food inflation continuing to rise as we approach the summer, both producers and consumers have been hit hard. In particular, crisps were affected by sunflower oil shortages and spiralling costs as a result of the war in Ukraine.

As Robert Strathern, co-founder of Fairfields, explains, "Production costs have increased for the business, which saw oil prices soar rapidly by as much as 72% last year and direct costs of growing potatoes up 32%, partnered with rising energy costs that were partially mitigated by on-site generation.

"As for why shoppers have been undeterred by price rises in crisps, well, we also know that crisps are the nation's favourite snack by a significant margin. Our own research last year indicated that over 80% of us eat crisps each month.

"It's my guess that in this cost-of-living crisis, the ability to have your very favourite treat is just one of those things that keeps spirits up, even if your overall 'treat spend' is down." This is the idea of the 'lipstick effect', where in times of financial crisis consumers choose to keep their 'little luxuries'.

"You might choose to sacrifice other, less favoured treats like popcorn – or big-ticket items like holidays and cars – but potato crisps are your number one and so remain on the shopping list", Robert adds.

Indeed, Sean Mason, co-founder of Two Farmers, has noticed that shoppers are continuing to purchase their favourite snacks despite price rises. "Research has shown that despite the cost-of-living crisis influencing a trend of trading down to own-label grocery items in other categories, shoppers have remained loyal to their preferred brand of crisps, and this is not expected to change.

"This is great news considering the pressure that rising costs of production, including that of sunflower oil, have put on producers like us. Other snacks, such as nuts, in particular, have seen sales fall in comparison."

Quality is king

With customers choosing to keep their little luxuries such as crisps, it is no surprise that quality is king when it comes to consumer demand.

This is something Simon Jones, co-owner of Forest Deli, is well aware of, as he tells *Speciality Food*. "For the ranges of crisps and snacks I feel one of the key choices is to be selling different ranges than the more widely available ones, especially as supermarkets will always undercut the independents on price. Quality is the deciding factor, as it is for all ranges.

"We carry a few different ranges to cover as many customer requirements balanced with some luxury treats as well as bags of crisps for a picnic."

Of course, customers are looking for value with their purchases, and independents are well-placed to offer this. "Unlike many other hand cooked brands, we deliberately choose not to sell in supermarkets because it gives our independent customers a unique selling proposition and adds the sense of 'specialness' that fine food retail customers are looking for, with the quality to match – hand cooked potato crisps, made with the potatoes we grow ourselves, at our independent family farm", Robert explains.

"Quality comes from the ingredients, from the short and sustainably led supply chain and credentials that mean no one will be disappointed; our crisps are all vegan and gluten-free so there's something for everyone."

Indeed, despite financial challenges, consumers are still interested in sustainability, and indies can communicate this effectively. "We believe it is all about demonstrating our credentials in a meaningful way to customers", Sean explains. "There's a large range of crisps available in the premium market, however, only Two Farmers offers both artisan hand-cooked crisps and a plastic-free, home-compostable packaging solution."

However, Robert also notes that value doesn't have to mean cheap. "In

> "We carry a few different ranges to cover as many customer requirements balanced with some luxury treats as well as bags of crisps for a picnic"

RETAILER INSIGHT



Simon Jones, co-owner of Forest Deli, shares insight on how to stock up for summer snacking, and what his top picks are for 2023

Our best-selling crisps are Two Farmers which are locally made and have totally compostable packaging which many are aware of – and essentially the crisps are excellent quality. They come in standard bags, sharing bags and also big tins and are probably the only ambient product we order every week.

For a truly luxury crisp we have started stocking the Brets range of crisps which are imported by Victus Emporium; the Aioli and Summer Truffle flavours are an excellent bag to share if you have a few friends around for a glass of wine.

The snack range from Eat Real is all gluten-free and low in salt and is very popular for customers with children for that reason. Their range is made with lentils, chickpeas and vegetables so is a pleasure without too much guilt, and great value.

For those looking for something different we offer a range of loose olives sold by weight, which meets the need to budget and only buy what you need, and also customers bring their own pots in to reduce waste as well. We get those from Olives Et Al who also provide some quite unique snacks as well that are very popular. The Sesame Peanuts and Chilli Puffs are superb to snack on, and really great for putting in bowls when the weather is nice enough to sit outside with friends.

We find the best way to boost sales is to have samples and tasters out on the counter for people to try, if the product is good enough sales will boom, if they don't, maybe the snacks are not the right ones!





fact, when it comes to quality goods, it shouldn't mean cheap. Value is a fair reflection of the effort and costs that go into producing, merchandising and selling a product. Quality also comes from the shopping experience itself.

"Innovative, co-branded displays are one way to add shopper intrigue. Lots of our most successful customers will have coronation fixtures, for example, and will beautifully display all the products needed for a great celebration – which, of course, must include crisps!"

Sean also encourages fine food retailers to create engaging displays to convey quality. "Some of our retail customers also display some of the ingredients we use, such as Droitwich salt, alongside our crisps to show that we use the same high-quality ingredients they are selling in their shops", he tells *Speciality Food*.

Summer selling

The warmer weather always brings more opportunities for on-the-go upselling in addition to sharing formats and outdoor snacking.

"As we head into the warmer months, they'll be a rise in outdoor snacking thanks to barbecues and picnics, and our 150g sharing bags and 500g sharing tins are perfect for these occasions. Convenience will be key, as crisps remain the ultimate grab-and-go snack", Sean explains.

But Robert believes that this summer will be particularly significant for snack sales. "We're seeing a real increase in sales of our 150g sharing format as we head into late spring. It's not just that summer is nearly here – it's also that it feels like one of the first truly unrestricted summers we have had since 2019.

"There is a real mood that, despite any cost-of-living concerns, we want to get together with friends and family and enjoy the company of other people. They're buying the kinds of crisps that they can pop in a bowl in the middle of the table and have everyone dig in."

With more and more people taking food outside the home to enjoy in nature, Sean warns that independent retailers have a key opportunity to offer more eco-friendly snacking. "During the summer, plastic waste increases by around 40%, so consumers may look to be more sustainable and choose planet-friendly alternatives.

"Businesses should encourage consumers to take their waste home with them, or at least find a bin, should they be out enjoying our glorious country this summer."

There is plenty of scope for fine food retailers to cash in on the snacking opportunity that summer brings, so focus on quality and sustainability to keep customers coming back for their 'little luxuries'.





STOCK CHECK

2022 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



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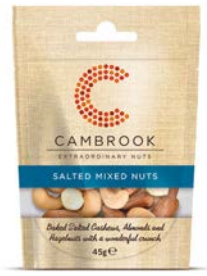
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FAIRFIELDS CHEESE AND ONION

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fairfieldsfarmcrisps.co.uk



FOREST FEAST SALTED DARK CHOCOLATE ALMONDS

These oven-roasted skin-on almonds are drenched in Belgian dark chocolate with a sprinkling of salt and a dusting of cocoa.

forestfeast.com



INDIE BAY SNACKS SOUR CREAM & ONION PRETZEL THINS

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TWO FARMERS WOODLAND MUSHROOM & WILD GARLIC CRISPS

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HARRY JACKSON, WINTER TARN DAIRY

A CALL FOR QUALITY

With dairy products becoming a basic – if sometimes overpriced – commodity in 2023, we explore how indie retailers can push for better

Look through the nation's fridges in 2023 and you'll be hard-pushed to find one which doesn't contain the simple dairy products which have become such staples of our diet over the past few generations – milk, butter, yoghurt and cream. Even consumers following vegan diets are likely to have plant-based alternatives to these items in stock on a regular basis. But with two key forces at work in the market right now – the cost-of-living crisis and the need for greater uptake of sustainable options – stocking the right products, which customers on a budget will buy, is a challenge.

Harry Jackson, founder of 100% natural butter business Winter Tarn Dairy, agrees that such products have become staples in the British diet. "Dairy products are used in everyday life in a whole range of other products and are a big focus when it comes to what we consume in Britain, he begins. "Dairy plays a part in helping many of us maintain a healthy balanced diet and as it's a natural food free from artificial ingredients it is also kinder to our bodies."

Quality is king

While nobody could argue with the ubiquity, versatility and health benefits prominent within dairy products, it's well worth going one step further and working with producers who share the independent retailer's modus operandi of sourcing considerately and smartly – particularly from suppliers who hold themselves accountable for high sustainable credentials. "Producing a quality dairy product benefits the environment, the economy and also people's health," Harry continues. "Firstly, it allows the producers we work with, specifically the farmers and dairies in our supply chain to set the price they need to earn an income and operate sustainably. Secondly, by paying a higher price for a properly produced product it allows us and our producers to look at our environmental impact and how we can change or modify that for the better."

"When a consumer chooses to buy good quality organic dairy, it doesn't just benefit their health, it benefits the planet," agrees a spokesperson from Daylesford, the organic farm and retailer. "Intensively farmed milk might be cheaper to purchase but it is to the detriment of the animal's health and longevity. Good quality dairy like ours will be produced sustainably and will protect the welfare of the animals. As for the consumer's health, choosing organic means they can be sure that the product won't be associated with antibiotics or any heavy chemicals linked to mass farming that may pass from grass, to cow, to milk."

A sustainable future

Daylesford has long been a champion of environmentally sound practices, promoting the cause across its bricks-and-mortar and online platforms. "We are passionate about farming sustainably and organically to protect our landscapes and the ecosystems around our farm." the spokesperson states. "Daylesford Organic is a regenerative and sustainable farm, working in harmony with nature to replenish and strengthen the land, providing healthy, nutritious food and drawing carbon down into the ground, removing it from the atmosphere. Everything we produce aligns with our ethos, and this includes our dairy herd and The Dairy where we produce our award-winning milks, cheeses, kefir and yoghurt."

For Winter Tarn Dairy, the future of high quality, consciously-produced dairy products is looking sound, thanks to an increased interest in sustainability and dairy products' versatility, ease of access and benefits to people and planet. "Whenever we are asked where someone should start when switching to organic products, we always recommend milk and dairy products at the top of the list as it benefits both the customer's health and the environment. We expect our customers to continue to invest in this category." The health credentials which form the foundation of quality dairy products are evolving, with brands across mainstream and independent categories catering for the demand for high protein and gut-friendly options such as natural live yoghurts and kefirs. "We are predicting an increase in demand for cultured milk products based on health reasons," says Harry, and as a result the business is planning to expand its range of yoghurts and kefirs over the next 12 months.

Meanwhile, Daylesford's range of consciously-produced dairy products is extensive and growing. "Our range covers milks, butter, yoghurts and cheeses, many of which are award-winning," explains its spokesperson. "Our cheeses are made using traditional methods and we have some classics like the Single and Double Gloucesters, plus our own creations like the Adlestrop, Penyston and Baywell. We started producing kefir several years ago, which has been hugely popular. There are three flavours: Organic Milk Kefir; Organic Blueberry & Açaí Kefir; and Organic Ginger, Turmeric & Honey Kefir." A smart, sustainable approach to production is reaping tangible rewards. "As a sustainable farm, we like to close the loop and avoid any wastage which is how we came to sell our Buttermilk. It is made from the liquid left behind after churning the cream for butter and creates a creamy, tangy, low-fat, high protein and versatile ingredient."


DAIRY HERDS AT DAYLESFORD'S ORGANIC FARM

A smart future for dairy

Thankfully for conscious producers and retailers, demand remains high for quality dairy produce – despite the cost-of-living crisis – offering a golden opportunity for *Speciality Food* readers. "Although people are certainly experiencing the impact of higher prices, we at Winter Tarn have seen people take more of an interest in the food they consume," says Harry. "They are keen to look into the provenance of what they are eating and how it is produced and by whom. This is something we saw emerge during the pandemic and it's continued into the cost-of-living crisis too. People understand the benefits of using products made by artisan producers. They understand that they are supporting the wider economy, buying a quality product which requires them to use less to achieve the same result. They are also aware of the wider environmental benefits of supporting artisan producers."

With education around the subject now more easily available than ever, "Consumers too are voting with their feet, demanding more locally produced foods, consigning processed foods to the rubbish bin," he continues. "Happily, this is creating a circular food economy, in which feedback between supplier and consumer is constant, the consumption of resources and waste is reduced significantly, and the supply chain is infinitely shorter, keeping more money within the local economy and creating more local wealth as a result."

By staying loyal to the fine food philosophies of small-scale production, short supply chains and quality as king, independent retailers can cater to the demand for better-for-all dairy products without compromise – all while increasing engagement with customers keen to be more conscious consumers.

> "People understand the benefits of using products made by artisan producers. They understand that they are supporting the wider economy, buying a quality product which requires them to use less to achieve the same result. They are also aware of the wider environmental benefits of supporting artisan producers"

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CROISSANT CRAZY

Purists, look away now. These are croissants but not as we know them, says Sally-Jayne Wright

At Joel Robuchon's upmarket deli on Piccadilly, hand-dipped, cube-shaped croissants are wowing foodies. They cost up to £8 each and have amassed more than 2m views on TikTok. Wheel-shaped croissants, croiffles, cronuts and croissants wrapped around cheesy cornbread are among the curiosities to be found. Even the plain croissants at the Lockdown Bakehouse in London's Wandsworth Town have been dipped in pistachio or rose icing to draw the eye.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE CROISSANT CRAZE?

- Free publicity when traditional pastries with a twist go viral
- Affordable indulgence
- Coffee shop culture
- The sweet-salty trend

ARE SAVOURY CROISSANTS A THING?

The appetite for sweet-salty has been around a while; think salted caramel, and hamburgers on brioche buns. Savoury croissants aren't to everyone's taste but they will add indulgence to your brunch menus and luxury to picnic hampers. We admired the asparagus, Baron Bigod and Coppa croissant seen at Toad Bakery, Camberwell.

WHICH SELLS BETTER, SWEET OR SAVOURY?

In this country, but not in Europe, plain, chocolate and almond croissants outsell savoury says Ash Hirani, baker and account director at Europastry. Classic butter croissants are their best-seller.

REMIND ME ABOUT TRADITIONAL CROISSANT SHAPES.

In the baking industry, a straight croissant denotes a butter croissant, while crescent-shaped is with margarine.



SHOULD WE USE FRESH OR FROZEN CROISSANTS IN OUR DELI AND CAFÉ?

Make friends with your local artisan baker and they can help design novelty croissants for you –perhaps a black croissant for Halloween or a Dad's croissant for Father's Day. If you have a Polish or Italian neighbourhood baker, you can ring the changes with Polish Saint Martin's Day croissants or sugar-coated cornetti.

Croissants baked in-store from frozen will entice your customers with their aroma and taste fantastically fresh.

WE'VE HAD MIXED RESULTS WITH FROZEN PASTRIES. WHAT'S THE SECRET OF PERFECT, FLUFFY CROISSANTS?

Charlotte Morcom, marketing manager at Speciality Breads, says, "A very common mistake is to bake straight from frozen." Defrosting for 20 minutes before baking allows the butter to melt within the layers so croissants rise properly in the oven.

Charlotte advises baking croissants for 20-25 minutes at 170-175°C until golden. She warns: "Know your oven. Too hot and frozen croissants will burn on the outside but be raw inside. Too low and the croissant will be pale, raw in the middle and flat."

Rest pastries for 15-18 minutes after baking. Another common error is to pile them on top of each other straight from the oven so they drop and lose fluffiness.

IS THERE A MARKET FOR FROZEN CROISSANTS (INCLUDING VEGAN) FOR CUSTOMERS TO BAKE THEMSELVES AT HOME?

Smaller households find loose, frozen, morning goods very convenient which is why many retailers use Fieldfare. These experts in scoop-your-own frozen goods scored one star with their All Butter croissant in the 2022 Great Taste Awards.

WE GET REQUESTS FOR GLUTEN-FREE CROISSANTS. CAN YOU HELP?

While Tesco's gluten-free croissants won bronze in the 2022 Free-From Awards, they also contained over 30 different ingredients. As a fine food retailer you can do better. The Manna Dew Gluten-Free Bakery in Battersea is London's first 100% gluten-free bakery and supplies mini and standard sized croissants nationwide with a shelf life of 60 days frozen from day of arrival.

HOW DO WE MAKE THE MOST OF THE TREND?

- Use your loyalty scheme to offer free pastries as rewards
- Introduce a coffee-with-croissant meal deal



"BAKING INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS EXPECT THE UK MARKET FOR SAVOURY AND PLANT-BASED CROISSANTS TO GROW"

- Lure customers in with big, fat, golden croissants but also offer smaller versions to suit all pockets
- Engage customers on social media. How about a competition for favourite croissant filling? Serve the winner in-store

ANY CROISSANT TRIVIA I SHOULD KNOW?

Almond croissants began life as a way for bakeries to resell day-old pastries. They filled them with almond cream and sprinkled with slivered almonds before re-baking.

SPEAKING OF LEFTOVERS, WHAT CAN WE DO WITH OURS?

Join the Too-Good-To-Go scheme where, for a third of the retail cost, customers collect 'magic bags' of unsold goods. They pay in advance through the app and collect within a time window specified by you. Benefits include: promotion of your store on the app, increased footfall, food waste prevention and costs partly recouped.

WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF CROISSANTS?

Novelty shapes will continue because they're cheaper than PR agencies. Baking industry professionals expect the UK market for savoury and plant-based croissants to grow.

Consumers will continue to treat themselves to sweet buttery croissants while worrying about heart health. For that, there is Europastry's latest creation – a frozen olive oil croissant which smells and tastes of olive oil. Purists, look away now.

> "The appetite for sweet-salty has been around a while; think salted caramel, and hamburgers on brioche buns. Savoury croissants aren't to everyone's taste but they will add indulgence to your brunch menus and luxury to picnic hampers"

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NOJO

GETTING CREATIVE WITH SUMMER DRESSINGS

From the classic drizzle of EVOO or balsamic vinegar to a multi-faceted sauce or marinade, independent retailers should get creative and think outside the box in the salad dressings sector this summer

With alfresco dining, long evenings and Great British heatwaves on the way, now is the perfect time for independent retailers to refresh their stock of oils, vinegars and dressings.

But with today's consumers looking for something more than a drizzle on top of their summer salads, how can indies offer a successful selection?

Catering to demand

It will come as a surprise to very few that great quality oils, vinegars and dressings are not only a must-stock essential for customers' cupboards, but for independent retailers of fine food, too.

While these store cupboard staples are available all year round, Laura Roberts, owner of Laura's Larder in Orpington, says it is during summer that they really fly off the shelf.

"It's funny really, there are months when we rarely restock the salad dressings and then one day the shelf is empty and you think, 'right – salad season is here'. But we are really led by consumer purchasing for when this starts.

"We then move them from the high-up shelf to eye level, expand the range and the restocking continues frequently throughout the summer. Simultaneously, the kitchen sees an increase in people ordering salads over sandwiches or toasties and we increase the range there too," she explains.

When it comes to what is popular, consumers are thinking outside the box in 2023 and looking past fancy packaging at the product itself. Indeed, as Simona Deifta, founder of London-based dressings brand Nojo, tells *Speciality Food*, "Independent fine food retailers can cater to consumer demand by offering versatile and high-quality dressings and sauces that appeal to a range of tastes and dietary requirements.

"In the UK, there is a growing consumer trend for plant-based offerings (up 37% in the last two years), and 71% of consumers are now looking for foods with sustainability credentials (Mintel). As consumer trends shift towards healthier and more sustainable options, offering products with clean deck ingredients and sustainability credentials can provide a point of differentiation."

Going global

While the classic EVOO and balsamic vinegar will always be strong performers, consumers are certainly interested in more global flavours and expanding their horizons beyond the salad.

According to Giles Henschel, co-founder of Olives et Al, "The market has seen a clear trend towards more versatile products in diverse flavours to allow consumers to be not just more experimental in their kitchens at home but also be able to use a product more widely and frequently so as to get the best value, which is even more important in the current economic climate."

Indeed, with the cost-of-living crisis affecting the way the public shop for and consume food, retailers need to offer something that is an all-rounder.

Giles adds, "Our dressings are not just dressings but also can be used as marinades for meat and fish; mixed with yoghurt or mayonnaise to make dips and sauces; a drizzle to decorate a finished dish or even in place of a coulis on a dessert." This, he explains, is how they cater to demand and meet the needs of consumers and trade customers including chefs and food service.

To highlight their versatility and show consumers their potential beyond the obvious, Giles encourages independent retailers to build a range of at least three products — say, a classic style, a spicy, and a more left-field option, perhaps with a multi-buy offer to encourage trial.

Like Olives et Al, Nojo also caters to more global and creative taste buds. As founder Simona tells *Speciality Food*, "There is a shift away from traditional dressings such as French dressing, towards more innovative and unique flavours driven by social media trends.

"For example, search volumes for 'yuzu sauce' have increased by 65% year on year, according to Google Trends. Nojo's range of versatile and clean ingredient dressings caters to these key trends, offering innovative flavours that pair well with a range of dishes beyond salads."

Getting creative

Laura has found being creative in the kitchen a surefire way to spice up summer sales. "To try to sell dressings for more than the summer period it's about new and interesting flavours such as yuzu, poke, tahini, etc. and using them in more than your 'traditional' salads – roasted vegetables, marinades, pulses, pasta, noodles, rice – push people to think beyond the classic salad," she tells *Speciality Food*.

Indeed, foodies want sauces for more than just salad leaves. "Consumers are using dressings and sauces in a variety of dishes beyond the traditional salad, such as marinades, dips, and sauces for meats and vegetables. For example, the search volume for 'sauce for roasted vegetables' has increased by 44% YoY according to Google Trends," Simona adds.

In order to communicate the versatile use of such staples, Laura likes to experiment in her own kitchen. "We make daily specials and promote them with a reel on Instagram and Facebook, and they are basic recipes that showcase the products used from the shop. Partnering with suppliers to offer tastings in-store is very important too.

"The continual showcasing of recipe suggestions, whether in social, in-store with sampling and promotions or just chatting to customers, is key. As curators of the shop, we do introduce great products so generally when people try, they buy," she explains.

Of course, as Giles adds,



RETAILER INSIGHT



Laura Roberts, owner of Laura's Larder, shares her best-selling oils, vinegars and dressings

We love Seggiano; we sell a few items from their oil and vinegar range but mostly olive oil, balsamic vinegars and glazes. We also sell Kentish Condiments' rapeseed oil, flavoured rapeseed oils and salad dressings. And for that extra bit of something special, of course, truffle oils. I don't think you can go wrong with Truffle Hunter's oils which come in some smaller accessible price point sizes. These truffle oils sell as well in winter as they do in summer.

A brand that has been growing in popularity is Nojo and their yuzu and poke dressings are incredible, among their other products. We also use them in our kitchen frequently to really enhance sales. Lucy's, although a bit more widely available, are also offering some interesting salad dressing flavours. Chilli oil is of course a staple, and we offer Kentish Condiments' chilli rapeseed, Seggiano's chilli-flavoured EVOO and Banhoek's fiery number, a staple for any home – it sells all year round.

"Inspiration is key, with recipe ideas either on-pack, on cards in-store, or featured recipe content on social media being hugely powerful to get consumers out of their comfort zones and trying more exotic products from fine food specialist retailers, rather than the standard products for uninspiring salads found in many of the larger retailers."

When using social media, Simona stresses the importance of paying attention to viral food trends, such as the infamous Feta pasta or salmon rice bowl. "Indies can promote the use of these products by offering recipe ideas and highlighting the versatility of the products on social media and in-store displays, with a focus on popular social media trends.

"Social media trends are particularly influential in shaping consumer tastes, with views of #foodporn increasing by 82% YoY on TikTok, according to research from WARC," she adds.

This summer, get creative in your deli counters, cafés and kitchens and you'll be on track for a successful season of salads and so much more.

> "To try to sell dressings for more than the summer period it's about new and interesting flavours such as yuzu, poke, tahini, etc. and using them in more than your 'traditional' salads"



2023 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



NOJO
ORANGE SAUCE
This sweet and fruity dressing is made using orange juice, naturally brewed tamari soy sauce, A-grade maple syrup and a touch of toasted sesame oil and ginger.
nojolondon.co.uk



HUNTER & GATHER ORGANIC COLD-PRESSED EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
This organic extra virgin olive oil made from Spanish olives is 100% pure and cold-pressed to retain its natural flavour.
hunterandgatherfoods.com



CYPRESSA
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
Using only superior-quality olives grown on rich and fertile soil, this classic EVOO is a fine food staple.
cypressa.co.uk



LUCY'S
PESTO DRESSING
This green pesto dressing is nut-free and vegetarian, perfect for drizzling onto pasta, salads or ciabatta for fabulous flavour.
lucysdressings.co.uk



CRUSH
SMOKED CHILLI OIL
Grown in Norfolk, this slowly infused cold-pressed rapeseed oil has a deep smoky flavour with a hint of chilli.
crush-foods.com



TRUFFLE HUNTER
BLACK TRUFFLE OIL
The highest quality black truffles are expertly blended with a unique flavour and cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil for an intense, earthy aroma.
trufflehunter.co.uk



SEGGIANO
CHILLI BALSAMIC GLAZE
A naturally dense, sweet chilli balsamic vinegar glaze made without thickeners or colouring.
seggiano.com



WILD ISLAND
RASPBERRY BALSAMIC
This versatile oil-free dressing is great with chicken, puy lentils and roasted peppers or to dress some freshly chopped herbs and salad leaves.
wildislandstore.co.uk



KENTISH CONDIMENTS
CARAMELISED SHALLOT & CIDER VINEGAR DRESSING
Fresh shallots are slowly cooked until they are at their sweetest then mixed with cider and apple balsamic vinegars to create this rich dressing.
kentishcondiments.com



OLIVES ET AL
CITRUS LEMON & DILL DRESSING
A surprisingly springy and zestful dressing made from EVOO, orange juice and wine vinegar infused with orange zest and shallot.
olivesetal.co.uk



FINAL CALL

One year on from my first column for *Speciality Food*, I've learnt a lot about the fine food industry, and I'm proud to be part of such an innovative and inspiring sector.

The war in Ukraine is unfortunately still being fought, and the knock-on effects of the struggle are still being felt by producers, retailers and consumers alike.

In fact, with inflation continuing to stay high and the cost-of-living crisis still a reality for many shoppers, fine food retailers need to be wary. Communicate why your prices may be higher than those at the multiples and find ways to offer quality and value.

However, there is plenty to be positive about in May. As I write this column, spring is blooming, with lighter evenings and warmer weather putting a gorgeous sepia haze over everything. This also brings alfresco eating, barbecues and picnics galore – my personal highlights for the coming season.

The warmer months provide plenty of opportunities for independent retailers as customers return to the high street and venture to rural locations and farm retail outlets. Many Brits are still choosing to staycation in 2023, so as summer approaches there is scope to cash in on tourism and showcase your local produce.

The long Easter weekend was a roaring success for the high street and independent retailers, with rural and coastal locations coming out on top. This was most likely due to the fine weather drawing people out for a wander – and any farm shop with an open area where people can walk around in the sunshine will no doubt have seen an increase as a popular location for sunny days. With longer and warmer days on the way, indies should focus on these key selling points to have a successful spring and summer season.

This month, embrace the positivity of spring and make it your goal to really connect with your customers. The sun puts a smile on everyone's face, so open up those windows and soak up those rays!

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

5 MINUTES WITH
MARIETTA HICKMAN, FOUNDER OF CHEEKY NIBBLE



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
I think I would be involved in the fitness industry. Health and fitness is a huge part of my life and I am currently training in my free time to be a personal trainer.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
My first job was aged 14, where I worked for a few weeks in the summer holidays at an aquarium.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Since starting my own business, I have had the opportunity to speak with young people about being an entrepreneur and help other founders who are about to or just launched their own businesses.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
Working retail in a cosmetics shop, the job itself was fun as I love make up and skincare, but it was in a very quiet area so the days felt long with only a few customers coming in.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?
I love reading messages or hearing feedback from customers on Cheeky Nibble. To see how something I made by hand has brought joy to their lives really makes my day.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
Running a business completely by yourself can be mentally exhausting as the mental load is extreme. Having to think about so many things really is a 24/7 job.

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
I think food is such a gateway to people's hearts, as it's often the centre of our strongest childhood memories and family occasions.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
I love Cantonese food so I would choose Cantonese BBQ roast duck with rice, with sides of salt and pepper prawns with lots of chili and prawn and crispy beancurd cheung fun.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
I have always followed the motto "Don't leave to tomorrow what can be done today", as it really is true to my personality.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
My brother used to eat Shreddie sandwiches. I had a bite of that once and it wasn't for me!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
I grew up loving cartoons and art, and recently received a copy of *The Little Prince*, illustrated by Chris Ridell.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Sweet! I have the biggest sweet tooth, which is why my business Cheeky Nibble specialises in granola inspired by nostalgic British desserts!



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TRIED & TESTED



FIBE PREBIOTIC SODA ZESTY ORANGE

This healthy drink is a classic soda reimagined for the modern day, providing a refreshing and juicy burst of orange and a satisfying fizz. With 5g of gut-loving prebiotic fibre to support digestive health, it's certainly one of those good-for-you moments that actually tastes delicious. What's more, it's low in sugar and only 30 calories per can. The *Speciality Food* team is getting good 'fibes' from this one!
drinkfibe.com



BOUNDLESS SMOKY BACON CHIPS

Continuing with the gut-health theme we have Boundless' activated sprouted sorghum snacks in their new smoky bacon flavour. These moreish chips are deliciously smoky and savoury, but don't be deceived as they are 100% vegan and good for you! Packed with fibre and activated TLC, they certainly cater to the current trends of plant-based ingredients and healthy snacking. A must-stock on-the-go snack for fine food retailers and cafés.
weareboundless.co.uk

JULIENNE BRUNO SUPERSTRACCIA

Think vegan cheese was nothing more than a coconut oil-based gloop? Think again! This wonderfully smooth and creamy plant-based Italian-style cheese with rich curds has been developed with the classic Neapolitan pizza in mind. Equally good when served cold or hot, it's a pizza topping and much more. It's especially delicious as a light and creamy addition to a rich sundried tomato pasta dish. Julienne Bruno's Superstraccia allows you to cater for your vegan or dairy-free customers without compromising on taste or texture – even non-vegans will be impressed!
juliennebruno.com



THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Daniel Jones, executive chef and co-owner of JT at the Abergwaun Hotel

JT at The Abergwaun Hotel in Fishguard is a modern European restaurant steeped in Welsh heritage, offering an a la carte menu which changes daily depending on what can be sourced that day, from locally foraged, farmed or fished ingredients like local lobster and spider crab. We are located in the picturesque village of Fishguard, known as the gateway to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, with its wonderful walks and viewpoints, and an abundance of wildlife. We boast an array of independent businesses plus many cosy cafés, pubs and restaurants.

Great produce forms the foundation of every dish we create and serve in the restaurant. We support local producers and know where to find great produce. In Fishguard, we are very lucky to have everything on our doorstep, from local fish and shellfish to great farms and an abundance of opportunity for both land and sea foraging. Here, if you put in the effort to source the best, you can find it, but it's not as easy as picking up the phone to order it! It's about who you know and how willing you are to go out and get the best.



I have worked with local farmers Martyn and Danielle for years, who produce the famous Fishguard duck and chicken. I even helped them on the farm during Covid lockdowns, perfecting my speed butchery skills and forming an invaluably close relationship to get the best prices and freshest deliveries for my guests to enjoy. Shellfish supplier Walshie's Shellfish has been a close friend for decades – he was my youth rugby coach, so again this old friendship gets me the best and freshest supplies from sea to plate in the same afternoon! Similar attitudes towards eating the best and enjoying hospitality are what have kept my supplier relationships strong. We celebrate our suppliers on our menus and welcome them all here to JT's for special occasions and their Christmas parties – we take care of them, and they take care of us and our guests.

We use local ales not just for getting our guests merry, we also lace our Fishguard duck gravy and our cockle broths with local ciders or ales, coupled with foraged seaweeds and wild herbs, shrubs and flowers to add a taste of the 'terroir' (habitat) to our sauces. It's a uniqueness that you can only enjoy from us here. Bluestone Brewery, located just nine miles away, supplies our ales and local beer.

Tradition and quality are showcased throughout what we do, so it makes so much sense to use the local water mill Y Felin just up the coast, which supplies us with several different flours that we use in so many different variations at the restaurant. They share the belief in tradition and quality that we have, and we love their products and what we can do with them. Equally, fresh local eggs and milk from Morfa Milk farm mean that almost everything we create here at JT's supports the local economy, as well as showcasing the wonderful produce of Pembrokeshire, which is often transported far and wide in bulk out of this little town.

PARTNER CONTENT

Garofalo



GOING BACK TO BASICS WITH ITALIAN FOOD

Are you stocking the traditional staples customers need to craft classic Italian dishes?

Whether whipping up a quick but delicious pasta or a more complicated dish, there are certain ingredients that have become as essential in British households as in Italy. For retailers, it's key to have a good stock of these British-Italian basics to become a one-stop-shop for your customers, with quality in mind.

EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

You simply won't see a great Italian kitchen without at least one bottle of premium oil. It's worth stocking both a mild-flavoured oil for cooking and another, more distinctly-flavoured EVOO for drizzling on salads and other dishes.

PASTA

No storecupboard would be complete without a few different varieties of dried pasta. Look further afield than the classic shapes such as penne and spaghetti, and experiment with orecchiette, paccheri and boccole. Moreover, short-cut pastas such as orzo and maccheroni are ideal for not only soups but stews and salads as well.

SAUCES AND PESTOS

It's important to stay stocked up with quick and easy pasta sauces and pestos to create delicious meals in minutes. Focus on authentic brands and flavours, but don't be afraid to experiment with modern twists or free-from options!

HERBS AND SPICES

Whether cooking a rich, herby ragu or decorating a salad with fresh basil, herbs and spices are essential to Italian cooking. Herbs such as thyme and oregano add a delicious Italian flavour, and good quality options will go a long way.

TINNED PRODUCE

Tomatoes are used as a base for a variety of pasta dishes, bakes and soups. As quality is key for authentic flavour, whole peeled tomatoes are considered to offer the best. It is also beneficial to stock a range of beans used in Italian cooking such as cannellini and borlotti so customers can create a variety of soups, stews and salads.

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







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Born in Bruton, Godminster's range of award-winning organic Cheddars have a new look that brings the spirit of Somerset to life. From our legendary Bruton Beauty to our distinctly untraditional truckles, we've blended flavour with folklore to make pairings that are perfectly placed at the heart of your cheeseboard. Dive in and savour the myths of our land with every mouthful.

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