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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the September issue of *Speciality Food*.

Christmas is well on its way, so we've gathered a plethora of expertise, product recommendations and industry insight to help you make Christmas 2022 your best festive season yet – from drinks and cakes to cheeseboards and accompaniments, via festive selling techniques from businesses in-the-know, we've got it covered.

We also delve into three of the most important topics in the sector today: the role of environment in today's fine food and drink industry, how you can grow your online audience without alienating your core bricks-and-mortar customer base, and tips on becoming a destination retailer.

Of course, September is also an important time in the independent retailer's calendar because of its must-visit shows, and you'll find previews of both Speciality & Fine Food Fair and lunch! within this issue.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
holly.shackleton@aceville.co.uk





What does the food industry need from Britain's next PM?

As the conservative membership gets ready to decide which candidate will become the next prime minister, the food sector has called on the two hopefuls to reveal their plans for British farming and retail

Over the past couple of months, eight conservative candidates became two as they battled it out for the top job at Number 10. But what does the food industry want from their next prime minister, and are they promising what is needed for the sector to thrive?

The farming industry

As Britain deals with the vital issue of ensuring food security and increasing British food production, both prospective leaders, Liz Truss, the Foreign Secretary, and Rishi Sunak, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, have responded to calls for a plan for the farming industry.

Minette Batters, president of the National Farmers Union (NFU), declared in an open letter to both candidates, "Both the pandemic and the situation in Ukraine has highlighted just how important domestic food production is.

"The government's Food Strategy, published in June, represented a clear milestone as it recognised that food production is a core part of our nation's resilience. In order to deliver on the ambitions within the Food Strategy, the NFU wants to see food production taken seriously."

Speaking in a similar open letter, farming charity Sustain also told Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss, "British farming needs a similar emphasis to the energy-efficient homes drive that has been debated. A plan is needed to support farmers to transition away from a heavy reliance on very costly synthetic fertiliser, pesticides, and animal feeds inputs, which also have a big environmental footprint.

"The Sustain alliance of more than 110 farming, conservation, health and welfare organisations asks you to commit to the full development and implementation of ELM, with the hope that Defra will ratchet up ambition as it progresses over the coming years. Diverting away from the 'public money for public goods' approach would present a hugely backwards step."

Both Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss answered calls from the farming industry with the ambition to increase British food production and improve food security. Truss has vowed to 'unleash' British farming from EU red tape restrictions to make the industry more competitive and free farmers to grow more sustainable and high-quality British food through an extension of the seasonal workers scheme, due to expire in 2024.

Meanwhile, Sunak has declared his intentions to establish a new food security target, including a statutory duty to monitor and report on domestic food production levels annually and intentions to introduce a new target for public sector organisations to buy 50% of their food locally, to back British farmers and improve sustainability.

The retail sector

While both candidates have appealed directly to the public and the farming industry, the independent retail sector has been seemingly left out of the conversation.

Speaking to *Speciality Food*, Andrew Goodacre, CEO of the British Independent Retail Association, explained, "First of all, I can see no pledges that will directly help independent retailers on the high street. There have been comments such as 'reviewing all taxes' which may include business rates, but we have heard similar proclamations in the past and nothing has changed.

"So, what would we like to see from either candidate is direct action to reduce business costs which are also spiralling out of control, to consider proposals from the low pay commission very carefully to avoid inflation-busting increases to the national living wage, more grants to be made available to support business investment, which will, in turn, reduce energy costs, and to consider a review of VAT and possible reduce as we approach the all-important Autumn trading period.

"The downside is that it will cost retailers money and time to amend prices, but it is a way of reducing prices to the consumer without impacting on the profit margins."

Tina McKenzie, policy and advocacy chair at the Federation of Small Businesses, added, "We have been pushing ministers for a package of immediate help in the current crisis; the cost-of-living crisis is embedded within the cost of doing business crisis. This is not the time for 'business as usual' when we see small business confidence slumping, and one in seven small firms are now saying they will need to shrink, close or sell their business. When we look at the retail sector specifically, businesses also report a negative confidence reading in our latest Small Business Index.

"We have put our priorities to all the candidates in this election, just as we have to all political parties. Changes are needed on four fronts – inflation, energy bills, fuel costs, and pre-profit taxes. At a time of the highest small business tax burden since Clement Attlee, we need politicians to realise you cannot tax your way to growth.

"To help the economy grow, we seek an energy rebate to small businesses with premises, to match the help that households have with energy bills; reductions in VAT, especially on energy, and fuel duty; a reversal of the NICs rise, which would create more jobs and increase take-home pay; and long-delayed reforms of late payments and business rates which hold back our high streets and suppliers."

Whether it is Liz Truss or Rishi Sunak who takes up residence in Downing Street on the 5th of September, one thing is certain – the fine food industry needs stronger policies and much more support in order to weather the cost-of-living storm that is wreacking havoc on the British economy.



"Instant karma before the storm"



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES

The Great Outdoors has played its part in helping Partridges as a speciality food shop for many years – but never before like this year.

Our new location facing a pedestrianised square in an affluent part of London was not high up on the list of positive commercial considerations when we relocated 18 years ago to our present site.

I was more concerned about the lack of display windows and the fact that the shop was setback some 30 yards from the main thoroughfare.

But in recent times the outside café and wine bar, and our landlords support in providing external seating for al fresco hospitality, have been a great help throughout the Covid challenges.

In particular this year will go down as momentous in terms of increased footfall.

Overall our footfall has increased by some 30% per month between May and July, despite onerous cost of living increases and very depressing predictions about the state of the economy in the autumn.

Even comparing with 2019, our last 'normal year', footfall is up by 35%.

I am not highlighting this in any way to claim success but rather to contrast it with the impending economic storm that is due to engulf us in a few months' time.

In many ways the temporary increase in footfall is providing an artificial veneer for the bigger picture.

Of course, in comparing this year with last year we are comparing apples and pears. Last year there were still Covid guidelines, travel restrictions and British weather patterns affecting trade.

This year there has been a spectacular run of warm weather from the end of May through to the end of July with as yet no significant rain in the forecast. Despite stock supply issues, recruitment problems and fast-increasing retail prices, things appear on the surface to be looking good.

But it is due more to a unique set of local and national circumstances rather more than any longer term positive trends.

For example, this year the Chelsea Flower Show returned after a hiatus in all its glory. This increased footfall in the area enormously especially due to the inspirational Chelsea in Bloom event which festoons the local streets and shops.

This was quickly followed by the Platinum Jubilee Street Party on June 4th, which provided record sales and customer numbers and when the feel good factor really took off – but more was to follow. Our Duke of York Square Wimbledon screen and Cameron Norrie's success in reaching the semi- finals gave us a great start to July.

The warm weather and the Lionesses' tremendous success in the Euros kept the wine department ticking over nicely, and even the Commonwealth Games seemed to boost what is normally our quietest week of the year.

And throughout all of this time we have seen more tourists in London than for the past two years as well.

The combination of all these factors, possibly Instant Karma following the terrible challenges of the pandemic, has resulted in very good sales figures, which undoubtedly look encouraging but are a distraction to the extent of the trading difficulties we are about to face.

I am not sure how we can prepare for these, but in September when the holidays are over and the first rains of autumn arrive I think the retail climate will change for the worse.

Having started working in the early 1970s I never expected to be reading about the possibility of power cuts again.

But Partridges survived the Three-Day Week and electricity rationing in 1974, and we often forget the long list of other crises that have come and gone over the past 50 years.

Hopefully 2022 will be another one to add to that list. As John Lennon wrote in his 1970 song *Instant Karma*, "We all shine on". And at least in 2022 we made some hay when the sun shined.

> "Despite stock supply issues, recruitment problems and fast-increasing retail prices, things appear on the surface to be looking good"

How UK food-to-go market recovery could benefit indies

After taking a significant blow from the pandemic, the on-the-go sector is back up and booming – and this could provide a key opportunity for fine food retailers

With no swift end to the cost-of-living crisis in sight, indie retailers have an opportunity to cash in on the growing foodservice industry, by focusing on providing value, quality and variety in their food-to-go.

This is due to research from IGD revealing that the UK food-to-go channel will be worth £18.9bn this year, which is 3% more than its pre-Covid value in 2019.

The market has performed better than predicted since the pandemic, but rising inflation has thrown a spanner in the works as this is projected to slow by the end of the year and throughout 2023 as consumers battle rising energy, fuel and food costs.

According to Nicola Knight, senior analyst for Food-to-Go and author of the forecasts, "Key opportunities for retailers over the next 18 months will include strengthening their meal deal offers as consumers become more value-led, and utilising customer data to create tailored offers that are relevant and savings-focused. There's also an opportunity for them to increase food-to-go ranges to meet consumer needs across a variety of meal occasions."

More than a third of the UK's office-based workforce is still working from home (at least for part of the time), according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). In fact, fewer than one in 10 say they want to return to their desks five days a week – hybrid is officially the new normal. And with rising fuel costs, commutes are becoming an unappealing expense.

Instead, workers would rather spend the petrol cost on small luxuries, such as a coffee from their favourite local café or a takeaway lunch from the high street deli.

Independent retailers such as farm shops and food halls can capitalise on this by stocking high-quality lunch options and tempting bakery items.

Food-to-go has also evolved through the hybrid working revolution, as options now include those that can be heated at home for workers who have to rush back to their makeshift desks.



> "Key opportunities for retailers over the next 18 months will include strengthening their meal deal offers as consumers become more value-led, and utilising customer data to create tailored offers that are relevant and savings-focused"



SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR

5-6 SEPT 2022

OLYMPIA LONDON

TRADE ONLY

REIGNITE YOUR FINE FOOD & DRINK PRODUCT LINES

Secure your complimentary pass to Speciality & Fine Food Fair, the UK's leading showcase of artisanal food & drink, to unearth the latest products from heritage producers to dynamic start-ups. Condense a year's worth of product sourcing into one exciting journey of discovery, plus gain industry insights and tips from our leading experts on our jam-packed stages.

What you can expect to see at the Fair...



Taste the Trends Kitchen

Experience live demonstrations and taste the latest innovations



The Drinks Cabinet

Discover innovative drinks producers taking the market by storm



The Discovery Zone

Unearth your next fine food & drink treasure from top start-ups



Sustainability Zone

Meet inspiring producers paving the way in sustainable practices

Secure your pass and browse the 2022 producers list here:

Register your interest for the 2023 Fair:



New report shows UK has 'untapped potential' for geographically protected foods

Geographically protected food and drink provide national pride and help to support local producers, so should the UK be focusing on this key way to boost British produce?

A group of cross-party MPs have published a report calling for a focus on establishing geographical protections for British foods.

Entitled Untapped Potential: Protected Food and Drink Name Policy in the United Kingdom, the report claims that the UK has missed out on opportunities to instill local pride and support local producers through its geographical indication policy.

According to Alicia Kearns, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Geographically Produced Food, "Now that the United Kingdom has left the European Union, we have a once-in-a-generation chance to define our food and drink policy, to promote our local industries, support the best of our culinary heritage, and further create good paying jobs in the agriculture, food and drink manufacturing sectors."

Set out in the report are 38 recommendations covering how to make GIs work for producers and build a stronger food brand at home and abroad, and the country should set itself the target of 200 registered GIs by 2030. To put this in perspective, the UK has only registered three GIs since leaving the EU in January 2021.

With post-Brexit international trade struggling to recover, and inflation rising at an alarming rate, championing unique British foods and protecting them internationally could be a good move for the UK.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STATS

£21bn

The hospitality sector has reported a staggering £21 billion loss caused by staff shortages, as a result of reduced trading hours, putting consequential strain on restaurant and food services staff and businesses nationwide. In fact, the sector is the fifth-most in need of staff across the UK. With the build-up to Christmas on the horizon, independent hospitality venues will need even more seasonal staff to keep providing top-quality service.

91%

As inflation hits a 40-year high, nine out of every 10 people surveyed (91%) by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that their cost of living had risen over the last month. The same proportion also said they had done at least one thing to reduce their energy bills. The increases have been the worst for the households on the lowest incomes who already spend a majority of their incomes on the bare essentials.

200

New plans to transform over 200 UK retail properties have been revealed as part of a "high street revival" initiative. One main proposal is the introduction of a High Street Buyout Fund to help communities buy empty high street properties and build "long-term resilience in town centres". But, as Mark Kacary, managing director of The Norfolk Deli, explained, "I honestly believe that it would take a lot more than just buying up empty premises and giving small businesses access to them to sort out the high street."

£2.3bn

New data from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has revealed that the value of food exports to the European Union (EU) dropped by £2.4bn in the first 15 months after Brexit. The data tracked exports from 1st January 2021, when the Brexit transition year ended, and showed that UK food exports had dropped by 19% to £10.4bn in the 15 months up to 31 March 2022. This fall was driven by a decline in exports of perishable goods to Europe and beyond, fincluding everything from British strawberries to cheese.

THE UK'S ANNUAL **INFLATION** COULD GO AS **HIGH** AS **15%** BY THE **START** OF **2023**, EXPERTS HAVE FORECAST, AS FURTHER SHARP **INCREASES** IN ENERGY **PRICES** PUSH UP THE **COST** OF **LIVING**

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

NEWS IN BRIEF

WINTER BLACKOUTS TO AFFECT FOOD INDUSTRY

Food industry chiefs have been warned by the government to step up preparations ahead of several days of organised winter blackouts. To prepare the nation for the blackouts, the government is understood to have asked figures in the food and drink industry for their views on how major power outages could affect food supplies and how a temporary loss of power could impact food reaching retail shelves.

DEFRA LAUNCHES INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO LABOUR SHORTAGES

After the farming industry reported significant labour shortages that resulted in a 'catastrophic' amount of food waste, Defra announced an independent review into solving the issue. The review into labour shortages will consider the challenges facing food and farming businesses to recruit and retain the labour they require and will provide recommendations for industry and Government to consider.

NORTHERN FARM SHOPS EXPERIENCE BURGLARY SPREE

NFU Mutual has suggested a swift removal of cash payments "if possible" after seven rural retailers were broken into across the North West and the West Midlands. One victim was Rupert Evans, owner of Denstone Hall Farm Shop and chairman of the Farm Retail Association, who had £15,000 stolen from the safe. David Harrison, farming sector lead at NFU Mutual commented, "We're very concerned that organised criminals are exploiting the remote locations of many farm shops to commit burglaries. While farm shop break-ins are sadly not a new phenomenon, we haven't had a series of highly-organised raids like this before."









FARM SHOP & DELI SHOW

24-26 APRIL 2023
NEC BIRMINGHAM



FARM SHOP & DELI SHOW 2023

The must-attend event where the UK specialist retail sector meets is returning to NEC Birmingham 24th-26th April 2023

Farm Shop & Deli Show, taking place 24th-26th April 2023 at the NEC Birmingham, is renowned as the go-to event for artisan, local and speciality food and drink, as well as giftware, technology and equipment.

Being part of the diverse specialist retail sector is rewarding but also challenging. That's why Farm Shop & Deli Show is highly anticipated within the sector as the event that brings together the industry's best brands with owners, directors, managers and buyers from specialist retailers focusing on local.

The show is evolving so you can too...

As the show continues to develop, a growing and popular focus is on health and nutrition. So, in response to the demand seen in 2022, Healthy & Natural returns to the show again this year as a dedicated section championing products, ingredients and services such as allergen-free, free-from, plant-based, vegan, vegetarian, sustainable packaging or technology. The area will be accessible to visitors seeking out products and services for grocery, foodservice, speciality and convenience.

Supported by The Vegan Society, the Vegan & Plant Based @ The UK Food & Drink Shows is a dedicated area that is a home to vegan and plant-based products, including meat alternatives, snacks, drinks, ingredients and everything plant!

Following their successful inaugural appearance in 2022, the Farm Shop & Deli Product Awards will return again next year. Developed to recognise and reward the best in specialist food and drink products, and open only to products that sold in farm shops, delis and other specialist food retailers, these Product Awards will boost the stand-out products in stores across the land, with winners announced live at the show.

In 2023, the show will again be running as part of the UK Food & Drink Shows alongside Food & Drink Expo, National Convenience Show and Foodex Manufacturing Solutions, encompassing the whole spectrum from food development, manufacturing, grocery to specialist retail, wholesale and foodservice. One badge gives visitors FREE access to all 4 shows.

All this means that visitors can benefit from the vast spectrum of exhibitors, products and live sessions, whilst exhibitors will have an invaluable opportunity to showcase their products and services to a wider, engaged audience.

Celebrating and supporting specialist retailers

The 2023 Farm Shop & Deli Retailer Awards returns, where 'Best in Region' winners, Newcomer of the Year and Retailer of the Year 2023 will be crowned live at the show on Monday 24th April. Free to enter, these Retailer Awards, in partnership with The Grocer, are highly respected in the industry for playing an important role in supporting, and celebrating, the UK's independent, specialist retail market across nine regions and 12 categories.

ARE YOU A **SUPPLIER?**

Here's five top reasons to exhibit at the Farm Shop & Deli Show

1 Farm Shop & Deli Show 2023 is on-track to be the biggest show yet as it continues to grow from strength to strength.

2 96% of visitors to the 2022 show influence or make the final decision to spend.

3 83% of exhibitors in 2022 generated new sales leads.

4 Over 57% of the show's visitors ONLY attend Farm Shop & Deli Show.

5 Extend the reach of your brand by entering the Product Awards. There are still spaces left for the 2023 show, but don't leave it too late as they are booking fast. Contact mat.rose@wrbm.com if you're interested in being part of it next year.

ARE YOU A SPECIALIST RETAILER LOOKING FOR THE LATEST TRENDS AND INSIGHTS?

Come and immerse yourself in the speciality food, drink and gifting market with the people, products and brands driving the industry forward.

In 2023, visitors can expect to see brands such as Atkins & Potts, Cakehead, COOK, Delice De France, Diverse Fine Food, Hawkshead Relish Company and Tudor Tea and Coffee to name just a few! Farm Shop & Deli Show is the only place to:

- Meet innovative and exciting suppliers.
- Discover fresh thinking and practical tips and techniques to increase your profits.
- Sample a diverse range of products your customers will love.
- Save time but seeing everyone in one place.
- Celebrate specialist success through the Retailer Awards.

NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: NEC, Birmingham
WHEN: 24th-26th April 2023
WEB: farmshopanddelishow.co.uk

> "We really like coming here. We do quite a few trade shows over the country, but the Farm Shop & Deli Show is just really good for a mixture of leads for new potential customers, but also getting that face time with our existing customers. A massive part of exhibiting is meeting new customers. It's what drives our business forward"
>
> **BEN CAFFYN, ACCOUNT MANAGER, COOK**

"The taste of nostalgia"



STEFANO CUOMO
MACKNADE

I am no fan of 'tub thumping' nostalgia, the patronising 'I remember when's' of folk too scared to solve what is in front of us.

I do believe in shared storytelling, stewardship, cherishing the past to learn and, best of all, simply wallowing in the glory of shared fun and our human experience... relishing what I call 'fireside feeling' – that pit of the stomach warmth that nourishes the soul when all is right with the world... recognising the very best of being human.

This is lovely and fluffy but where is the relevance?

Well, with soft fruit season now fully upon us it reminds me of Macknade's heritage and my family's story here at Macknade and, as with so many of us in this sector, we don't just sell stuff!

We have back stories, influences, narrations to be shared, that help our customers connect with our wonderful produce and in turn themselves, their communities, and set the forward path for us all.

Our family of farmers came to Macknade yes to sell produce, but critically to engage with the land and work with it to produce the best of British bounties.

By early summer we are well set in with Kentish strawberries, the global byword for Wimbledon and tennis (shout out to the scientists and engineers buried in their NIAB labs, in the heart of Kent, coming up with the perfect strawberry, year after year, and too often overlooked by the general public!), other soft fruits follow. Even the odd logan berry... commercially unwanted, but the elegant length and textured mouthfeel pulls me straight back to shaded corridors of berries, and happy PYO days (one for the scales and two for me).

But, as a son of Kentish farmers and a child of Kent there can be no other true champion than the cherry!

The first picnics of the year would be held under heaving boughs of cherry blossom, in the aptly named Paradise Orchard, an easy basket stroll from home. Criss-crossing the farm, we would see the fruit starting to take shape and then the great prize as, finally, the heat of summer ripened the cherished cherry itself.

The highlight for the farming community was the great show in July – the National Cherry & Soft Fruit Show. Teams were sent out to pick the very best fruit from the trees, in the early morning light, to polish and position in punnets, to then be presented in the marquee to the master judge and their coterie, with the winning punnet sent to the Queen, no less!

As kids we were in awe of this spectacle, normally grubby farmers dressed in their ties and jackets debating the size, colour and eating quality and texture of this deeply Kentish fruit. A whole wonderful world of its own!

This story comes to mind because my uncle, over lunch, dropped off a trophy Macknade had consistently won for our cherries during the last century, and it coincided with Macknade hosting the latest National Cherry & Soft Fruit Show.

The crisp white marquee was placed in our car park, filled with the very best fruit in the country, an altar to the quality of our farmers, the proof of their labours, and most of all a clear symbol of the sheer joy of sharing fruit and the very best produce. Produce that in one bite shoots us back to the joys of the past... that nostalgia again!

What of course this marquee really represents is how Macknade as a community, and just one example of the incredible SMEs feeding our nation, isn't just sinking into past farming glories but taking that historical joy and supporting the next generation to understand the value of this seasonal bounty and all it represents, economically, culturally and experientially.

Through that bite of the cherry, we relish our past, but it is through sharing it and the stories in which it's wrapped that we understand what makes us human and it helps us shape the future we want.

> "We are not just sinking into past farming glories but taking that historical joy and supporting the next generation to understand the value of this seasonal bounty and all it represents, economically, culturally and experientially"

Autumn trends in fine food for 2022

As summer draws to a close, we reveal the top food trends for autumn this year

Autumn is an exciting time of year for the fine food industry, as shoppers look to indulge when it comes to food and drink, and begin gearing up for the festive season. But what are the key food trends for autumn in 2022?

BRING ON THE COSINESS

According to Jemma Coombe, head of new product development at Daylesford, "Traditionally this time of year is associated with the end of summer holidays and the return to normal routines of school and work.

"It's a time when temperatures drop and daylight hours shorten, causing people to withdraw back indoors. As a result, we focus on items that encourage a feeling of cosiness, such as warming broths and soups, and afternoon tea treats.

"Our Real Meals are popular year-round but especially in autumn and winter as they are an easy, convenient way to enjoy a hot, delicious, nourishing organic meal without having to worry about prepping ingredients, cooking and cleaning up – ideal for easing into a new season."

Shoppers also tend to have more of a sweet tooth as we approach the colder months. As Philip Linardos, CEO of the digital wholesale platform ShelfNow, explained, "Trending product categories amongst buyers on the digital marketplace include bakery, cakes, biscuits, confectionery and sweets. Confectionery orders spike most around autumn, as shoppers indulge for Halloween, Bonfire Night and Christmas."

FOCUS ON HEALTH

While consumers will be on the hunt for comforting flavours and textures this autumn, there is still a key focus on health that is driving the market.

As Philip explained, "Low and no drink options are popular choices amongst buyers as they are seeing increased demand for healthier options in preparation for Dry January. Also, as we are seeing a continued trend of healthy options, low and no drinks are a continued popular buy including functional drinks such as kombucha."

This is something Jemma also noticed, adding that, "Over the colder months, people are drawn to items that enhance wellbeing, such as nutrient-dense cold-press juice shots and supplements to support a healthy lifestyle. Healthy, satisfying snacks are also a good idea – anything that can be popped into a lunchbox, handbag or pocket."



HOW TO CAPITALISE ON THE TRENDS

According to Jemma, "As ever, quality and variety are key to ensure you appeal to a wide range of needs. Independent retailers can differentiate their offerings by highlighting details about their products, how they are made and where they come from. If you have positive stories about ethical sustainability, traceability and supporting local producers, then share them!"

Phillip suggests that independent retailers keep up to date with evolving consumer demand for low and no drink options, and plant-based products that cater to different dietary requirements. He concluded, "Retailers should aim to be ahead of the curve when planning their autumnal stock along with innovative ways to display and promote their new range of artisan and speciality products."

> "Over the colder months, people are drawn to items that enhance wellbeing, such as nutrient-dense cold-press juice shots and supplements to support a healthy lifestyle"



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UK retail sector second-most in need of staff, research reveals

As the cost-of-living crisis bites, retailers are desperately in need of skilled staff to keep businesses going in the build-up to Christmas

With the build-up to Christmas on the horizon, indie retailers and businesses with hospitality venues will need skilled staff to keep providing top-quality service.

But recent research from Claims.co.uk has revealed a record high of 1.3 million job vacancies over the past three months, with both retail and hospitality highly in need of experienced workers.

Almost topping the table as the second-most in need of staff was the retail and wholesale industry, with 33,587 job listings available on Indeed in June. Product managers (6,734) and sales assistants (5,397) are the most in-demand jobs within this industry. While retail is one of the sectors that has seen the largest increase in vacancies this year, hiring is an issue across the food and drink industry – and beyond.

Martin McTague, national chair of the Federation of Small Businesses, told *Speciality Food*, "A third of small businesses say finding appropriately skilled staff is one of the largest barriers to growth."

This is something Svetlana Kukharchuk, owner of The Cheese Lady, has found challenging. "It has to be the right kind of thing for them and for us," she told *Speciality Food*. "I don't want somebody who just needs a job, so they need to be passionate. They need to be at least a foodie, if not a cheeseaholic. And then the cheese knowledge we can teach."

Shoppers are buying less food as inflation rises

Nearly half of UK adults are buying less food as the cost-of-living crisis puts pressure on household spending across the country.

The latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has revealed that 49% of consumers said they are consciously buying less food and drink than they were at the start of the year. In fact, the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) added that 60% of shoppers are now spending time saving money, up from 55% in March.

Helen Dickinson, chief executive at the British Retail Consortium, told *Speciality Food*, "Sales volumes are falling to a rate not seen since the depths of the pandemic, as inflation continues to bite, and households cut back on spending.

"Discretionary purchases were hit hard, especially white goods and homeware, while consumers also traded down to cheaper brands in food and non-food alike.

"Retailers are caught between significant rising costs in their supply chains and protecting their customers from price rises. The government needs to get creative and find ways to help relieve some of this cost pressure – the upcoming consultation on transitional relief is a golden opportunity to ensure that retailers aren't overpaying on their business rates bills.

"Government action on transitional relief would make a meaningful difference to retailers' costs and ease pressure on prices for customers."

> "Sales volumes are falling to a rate not seen since the depths of the pandemic, as inflation continues to bite, and households cut back on spending"

Farming industry calls for Government to realise the importance of soil health

A new report from the National Farmers Union (NFU) demonstrates that soil health is a crucial factor in meeting net zero targets by 2040

Entitled *Foundation of Food,* the National Farmer's Union (NFU)'s new report highlights why good soil health is crucial to the nation's farming systems and is essential to British food production.

In the report, the agriculture representation body explains the benefits healthy soil delivers in reducing flood risk, supporting wildlife habitats and biodiversity, and the sequestration and storage of carbon.

Despite soil playing such an important role in protecting food production and the environment, "worryingly, much of the UK's agricultural soil is in desperate need of restoring by strengthening its health and vitality; having been subjected to intensive farming methods and agrochemical inputs for decades", according to Roger Kerr, chief executive of Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&G).

As NFU vice president David Exwood, explained, "Farmers are in the best position to continue work to support soil health and ensure it for the future. The importance of healthy soil to everyone cannot be underestimated. It underpins our productive farming systems, and delivers huge benefits for the environment, as the farmed landscape and offers resilience to climate change."

Building on this, James Woodward, sustainable farming officer at Sustain, told *Speciality Food*, "Soil health is one of the pillars of a resilient and sustainable farming system and sector. By putting soil health at the top of the agenda, farmers can find ways to continue producing food while doing more to tackle climate nature emergencies. If we continue to push soil towards its tipping point, we risk our ability to do both."

But farmers aren't the only ones needing to do the work when it comes to championing soil health. Independent retailers also need to be vigilant by visiting farms and ensuring their suppliers are looking after their soil through regenerative and organic techniques.

As James explains, "Independent food retailers can play their part by supplying from farms that are doing good work. This can be through certified organic produce, where trust is built into the system, or through close relationships with farmers where the retailer can tell the farmers' story."



> "By putting soil health at the top of the agenda, farmers can find ways to continue producing food while doing more to tackle climate nature emergencies"



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Should the UK ban nitrates in processed meat products?

With 90% of bacon sold in the UK containing nitrates, ministers and food scientists are calling for a ban to protect public health.

A group of cross-party MPs and leading food scientists are calling on the government to ban the use of nitrates in the UK, but fine food producers argue it is crucial to the making of high-quality meats.

Although the chemical is widely used in bacon, charcuterie and other processed meats, research studies have linked it to the development of bowel, breast and prostate cancers.

Professor Chris Elliott, director of the Institute for Global Food Safety at Queen's University Belfast, explained, "Nitrites are found in many foods and can be perfectly harmless. But when they are used to cure bacon that is then cooked and ingested, they produce carcinogenic nitrosamines in the stomach."

As a preserving agent, nitrates ensure that the product has a decent shelf life, which prevents food waste, but they also stop the growth of dangerous bacteria.

James Santillo, co-owner of Sunday Charcuterie, told *Speciality Food*, "We use nitrates in the making of all our minced 'salami' products as the research shows that the risks of not using it greatly outweigh the risks of using it.

"That risk is botulism. Botulism bacteria, whilst rare, releases a toxin that is one the deadliest foodborne pathogens. The name botulism comes from the Latin word for sausage – Botulus, this is literally a sausage disease and the use of nitrates is the way we can ensure that this toxin is eradicated."

Therefore, there is a strong case for the use of nitrates to keep food safe from harmful bacteria and extend shelf life.

How indies can capitalise on shoppers' lack of trust

As shoppers increasingly distrust the multiples, independent fine food retailers have a key opportunity to cash in on.

A new survey from YouGov has revealed that 43% of shoppers now distrust supermarkets, believing the quality of food being sold is declining. They also feared that UK standards will be undermined by changing regulations and trade deals. This provides a key opportunity for indies to cash in, by offering quality, trust and a unique personal touch.

In fact, as Martin McTague, national chair of the Federation of Small Businesses, explained, "Our own recent research with Public First shows consumers prefer to shop at a small business because they want to support the local economy (72%), like the personalised service (49%) and prefer the experience (38%)."

With more shoppers looking for higher quality produce for their money in the cost-of-living crisis, fine food retailers can help to provide more bang for your buck.

According to Jeff Moody, commercial director at the British Independent Retail Association (Bira), "Shopping local has now become a mantra as consumers try to reduce fuel costs whilst also trusting in the offering independent retailers offer."

> "Shopping local has now become a mantra as consumers try to reduce fuel costs, whilst also trusting in the offering independent retailers offer"

How fine food retailers can champion food traceability using technology

Food traceability is becoming increasingly important to consumers as they become more aware of safety issues and sustainability, and indies can provide the transparency they need

As small indie retailers are currently the most trusted retailers in the UK, they have a key opportunity to capitalise on increased consumer desire for improved traceability. In fact, labelling and traceability have never been more important.

According to Andy Zynga, CEO of EIT Food, "This is a demand we are increasingly hearing from consumers, with over half in the UK (54%) saying that they take sustainability into account when making food choices. By offering consumers greater access to information about where their food comes from, they can make more informed choices about sustainability and the health benefits of the products they buy."

With barriers such as price and accessibility, the uptake of digital solutions has been limited due to a lack of technological maturity, and there is a perception that digitalisation of processes may be too costly and overcomplicated for smaller businesses or farms.

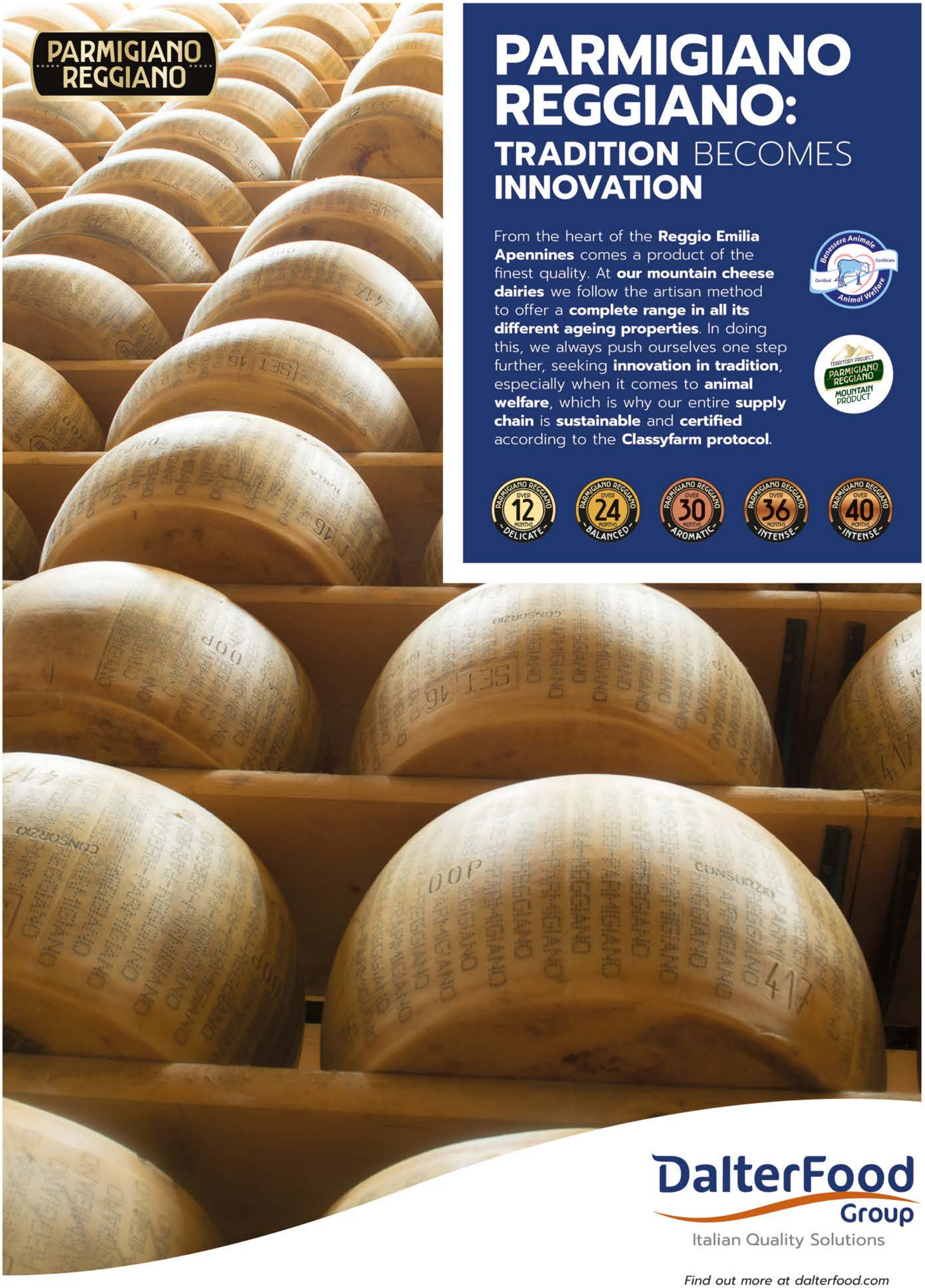
One business already using technology to provide traceability is The Ethical Butcher. Glen Burrows, co-founder, explained, "We buy direct from farmers, visit each farm and make a film about how the animals are raised, what regenerative methods are employed and where they are, we then link this information to the product with a QR code which is included on the thermal print label on each product."

Andy added, "There is a clear opportunity for fine food retailers to embrace consumer demand by providing provenance to their customers. One way they can do this is to integrate more closely with their local food suppliers and producers, dealing with them directly where possible to reduce the complexity of the value chain for each product. Providing this local provenance can also help to reinforce the premium nature of their products."

As Glen concluded, "Retailers simply need to demand more information, and if this isn't available, try to shorten the supply chain as much as possible by buying directly from the producer."

> "There is a clear opportunity for fine food retailers to embrace consumer demand by providing provenance to their customers"





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lunch! 2022

The definitive trade event for the café, coffee shop and food-to-go sector is back at ExCeL London, 14th-15th September

This year's lunch! show, taking place 14th-15th September at ExCeL London, is open to thousands of retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers looking to discover the best choice of speciality food, drink, tech and innovative packaging solutions.

Returning to ExCeL alongside its sister shows Casual Dining & Commercial Kitchen, thousands of catering professionals attend lunch! to discover everything in the food-to-go sector – including the best fresh ingredients, coffee, seasonal salads, breads, cakes, crisps, drinks, juices and smoothies on the market. As well as IT solutions, interior design, equipment, signage and packaging, there's a wealth of innovation down every aisle to suit every taste and business need.

Annually, the event attracts major food-to-go operators and retailers, contract and travel caterers, wholesalers, independent and multiple cafés, convenience stores, coffee houses, delis, and sandwich shops around the country. These include senior professionals from Pret, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Greggs, M&S Food, Boots, Co-op Food, Debenhams, Roadchef, itsu, Caffé Nero, Costa, Selfridges, Whole Foods Market, WH Smith, Waitrose and more.

itsu, Caffè Nero and GAILS Bakery join lunch! line-up

The show's free-to-attend seminar programme is renowned for having the biggest names in the industry provide exclusive insights and inspiration across a range of business topics (across three Keynote theatres). The first wave of speakers to be announced are: Will Stratton-Morris, CEO of Caffè Nero; Ganan Kanagathurai, UK CEO of Itsu; Marta Pogroszewska, MD of GAIL's Bakery; James Shapland, founder and CEO of Coffi Lab; Will Kenney, commercial director at 200 Degrees; Amanda Lowe, head of innovation at Soho Coffee Co; Neil Sebba, MD at Tossed; Paolo Peretti, MD of AMT Coffee; James Kidman, head of food at Crussh; Jim Winship, director of British Sandwich & Food To Go Association; and Mark McCulloch, founder of Hospitality Rising.

Commenting on the show, Will Stratton-Morris, CEO of Caffè Nero, says, "Having attended dozens of trade shows over the years, this is unquestionably one of the best. Vibrant, quality players and very engaging."

Over 300 exhibitors

As well as providing insights and inspiration across three theatres, lunch! will feature a bustling central exhibition with over 300 exhibitors helping to shape the future of the food-to-go sector over the next 12 months.

Brands like INTUNE Drinks, Wunderfish, Days Brewing, CANNA COFFEE, Brew-it Group, Decent Packaging, Miami Burger, Peak, Nestlé, OH MY GUM! – and others – are making their lunch! debut. They will join returning big names including KIND Snacks, Innocent Drinks, UCC Coffee, Delice de France, Soho Sandwich Company, ProAmpac, TRIP Drinks, Magrini, Hippeas, Radnor Hills Mineral Water Company – and many more.

As for new products, here's just a taste of what's available at the show:

Wunderfish GmbH is promoting BettaF!sh TU-NAH that tastes like tuna but made with seaweed and legumes, BettaF!sh TU-NAH is the most authentic vegan alternative to tinned tuna on the market – 100% plant-based and high in protein.

Herbal Infusion is exhibiting its new Co Crunchy pumpkin seeds toasted to perfection and coated in a vegan sour cream and chive seasoning. Each 35g bag offers 12g plant-protein, 2g carbs, 2g fibre and 50% less salt.

Ninju is introducing the Ninju Kids Super Shot. A chilled blend of water, fresh fruit juices, natural vegetables, and added vitamins and minerals (A, C, D, Calcium, Magnesium and Zinc).

LoveRaw is promoting its new Nutty Choc Balls, a crunchy hazelnut coated in delicious hazelnut cream, covered in a crisp wafer shell and coated with LoveRaw's iconic milk choc and hazelnut pieces. Each pack contains two individually wrapped plant-based chocolate balls, free from palm oil and anything artificial.

Waterbomb is exhibiting What A Juice LIGHT – Tropical. Each 150ml serving gives 45% of the daily vitamin C, D and Zinc recommendation to support your immune system and metabolism.

BOL Foods is promoting its NEW and IMPROVED BOL Power Shakes: a nutritionally complete meal in a bottle packed with 100% plant-based whole foods and all 26 essential vitamins and minerals. Powered by 20g high protein and with no added sugar. Available in four recipes: Chocolate Peanut Butter; Chocolate Orange; Vanilla, Oats & Almond; Mango & Coconuts.

Agua De Madre is showcasing Blood Orange Bitters 33cl – perfect single serve award-winning water Kefir with a Blood Orange Bitter flavour. This functional drink has 55 billion live cultures – the ideal invigorator for the gut.

Delicious Ideas Food Group is exhibiting Plastic Free Grab 'n' Go range of snacks. They feature a mix of vegan, low sugar, and high protein options – including salted pretzel pearls, fruit and nut, gourmet jellybeans, hot and spicy nut and corn mix, and more.

Love Corn is showcasing its new flavour – Chocolate Crunchy Corn. It features classic crunchy corn made with the smoothest milk chocolate with a hint of sea salt.

INTUNE is promoting its range of award-winning CBD sparkling soft drinks. Created to bring CBD out of the health space and into the everyday, INTUNE fits into the lives of busy people: from a zesty accompaniment for a working lunch to a mid-afternoon pick-me-up.

Epic Oats have created a range of flavoured instant oat pots with an innovative healthy granola topper to add texture, flavour and interest.

Sharpak part of Groupe Guillin has unveiled a new innovative hybrid packaging for sushi, bakery, and deli designed with multiple benefits for food-to-go, retailers, consumers and importantly, the environment.

And that's just a small snapshot of lunch!'s eclectic exhibitor list, which is renowned for promoting emerging start-ups and speciality producers alongside some of the industry's best-known suppliers.

NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: ExCeL London
WHEN: 14th-15th September 2022
WEB: lunchshow.co.uk



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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Forest Feast releases world first



Snack brand Forest Feast has announced the launch of a new addition to its selection of Chocolate Dipped Fruit: Double Dipped Peanut Butter & Milk Chocolate Dates.

The Chocolate Dipped Fruit range currently consists of 60% Cocoa Dark Chocolate Sour Cherries, 60% Cocoa Dark Chocolate Figs, 60% Cocoa Dark Chocolate Mango, and the newly-released Double Dipped Peanut Butter & Milk Chocolate Dates.

This range successfully taps into the growing demand for premium and indulgent snacks.

Bronagh Clarke, marketing director at Forest Feast, said that the innovation was developed in-house after homemade stuffed dates became a trend during the pandemic: "We noticed that people were making their own at home and we knew that with our capability we could crack it in-house on a larger scale. Take-home chocolate is still growing 4.8% YOY, but for the first time since pre-Covid we are starting to see that growth slow down. With the cost of living rising and health on the agenda, consumers are being more selective about the treats they choose, actively opting for quality over quantity."

forestfeast.com

New vegan chocolate treat from LoveRaw



Indulgent plant-based chocolate brand LoveRaw has added a new treat to its range.

The new Nutty Choc Balls are made using whole hazelnuts dipped in a smooth vegan hazelnut cream, before being coated in LoveRaw's plant-based chocolate and rolled in crunchy hazelnut pieces. As with the rest of the LoveRaw range, the new launch does not contain palm oil, dairy or artificial ingredients.

Manav Thapar, co-founder of LoveRaw, said, "Our mission is to create the best-tasting and innovative plant-based chocolate and our new Nutty Choc Balls are unlike anything else on the market. People leading a vegan or plant-based diet have typically been underserved by confectionary brands, so LoveRaw is leading the charge to bring innovation, choice and quality to consumers with chocolate products that taste as good, or better than, conventional chocolate."

eatloveraw.com

Mrs Elswood celebrates 75 years with brand refresh

Popular gherkin brand Mrs Elswood has been given a revamp in celebration of its 75 years in the industry, in order to appeal to younger customers without alienating its core audience.

The appearance of the eponymous character on the packaging has been given a more modern look, her first since the 1990s, with her outfit now corresponding with the red and green seen elsewhere on the brand's visuals.

The new look will feature across the entire Mrs Elswood pickled gherkin range, including Whole Sweet Gherkins, Sandwich Slices, Dill Spears and Burger Gherkins.

Gherkins and other pickled vegetables are enjoying a surge in popularity, largely led by younger audiences, as a result of more consumers than ever preparing meals at home during the pandemic. Indeed, during the pandemic, Mrs Elswood saw a 43% YOY growth (Kantar 2021).



Mat Moyes, Gherkin Guru at Mrs Elswood said, "Like many categories, the pandemic brought new consumers to Mrs Elswood. We felt it was the right time for a pack refresh, and to give our iconic and much-loved Mrs Elswood character a makeover to bring her up to date. We tested our new 21st century Mrs Elswood packs with gherkin consumers across the UK and they reacted positively on every dimension, from recall through to purchase intent and overall preference."

mrselswood.com

Fudge Kitchen embraces compostable packaging

Fudge Kitchen has launched a new range of products in fully compostable packaging.

The new format, made from renewable resources including TIPA bio-based film, NatureFlex cellulose and PaperWise paper, can be composted in consumer's household food waste (subject to local authorities) and instructs consumers on how to dispose of the packaging properly on-pack.

The products now packaged in the new format are Fudge Kitchen's Chocolate Coated Honeycomb, Raspberry Coconut Ice, Rock Salted Peanut Brittle and Sea Salted Caramel Crumbly Fudge.

The move supports Fudge Kitchen's recent sustainably efforts, including the publication of its 2021/2022 Giving Report which highlights the work it is doing to support the environment and local and community initiatives.

Sian Holt, MD of Fudge Kitchen, said, "During the pandemic, we began challenging ourselves to actively do more to minimise our environmental impact and give back wherever possible. As well as changing chocolate supplier, we are also trialling cane sugar (grown overseas) to beet sugar grown predominantly in the UK."

Rupert Allinson, head of sales at Fudge Kitchen, said, "There's a responsibility for all businesses to play their part in tackling the climate emergency. We don't want to just do 'enough' to keep in line with government rules and legislation, instead we want to pave our own way, going above and beyond to minimise the impact we have."

fudgekitchen.co.uk





wonderland DESIGN

Four new organic breakfast cereals from Doves Farm

Organic brand Doves Farm has launched a four-strong range of new plant-based and organic breakfast cereals.



Produced on the business's family fam in Wiltshire, the cereals are made using a variety of ancient grains including buckwheat, teff, quinoa and rice and are wholegrain, made with sustainably grown ingredients, and contain no artificial colours, flavours or preservatives. Each item in the range is also gluten-free and certified vegan.

The four variants are: Ancient Grain Breakfast Flakes, Ancient Grain Fruit & Fibre Flakes, Ancient Grain Cereal Hoops and Wholegrain Cocoa Rice Pops.

Clare Marriage, founder of Doves Farm, said, "Following strong 2020 growth, the Breakfast Cereal market is now in mid-single digit decline as shoppers return to offices more. The new Doves Farm Breakfast Cereals are well placed to help drive growth by aligning themselves to consumers' increasing interest in food that's better for the planet as well as their health".

"Buying organic has many benefits. However, organic products are still not well-represented in the breakfast cereal category, which has few dedicated organic brands. We are looking forward to working with retailers and wholesalers to explore the opportunity to expand organic's footprint in the main breakfast aisle with the new Doves Farm breakfast cereals, and drive scale quickly by offering organic shoppers a range of quality products with good nutritional values, from a brand they know and trust."

dovesfarm.co.uk

The Real Olive Company creates vegan pestos

Buoyed by the success of their fresh organic tapenades, The Real Olive Company has launched two organic vegan pestos.



The new products – Organic Fresh Basil Pesto and Organic Sweet Tomato & Kalamata Pesto – are ideal for quick and easy midweek meals and contain no nuts, cheese and allergens.

The Fresh Organic Basil Pesto is vibrant and cheesy, containing pumpkin seeds in place of nuts alongside a blend of natural ingredients.

The Organic Sweet Tomato & Kalamata Pesto offers deep Mediterranean flavours thanks to sweet red peppers, sun dried tomatoes and fruity Kalamata olives.

Karin Andersson, founder and marketing director of The Real Olive Company, said, "The vegan and plant-based market is still seeing strong growth but there is a real lack of innovative fresh vegan and organic pestos that stand out in the flavour department. With the help of our talented NPD chef, Charlie we feel that we have created something really special for everyday use and believe there is a growing demand from today's discerning consumers for fresh organic delicious tasting food.

Our purpose 'to make life taste better by connecting people to the natural vitality of real food' guides us through all aspects of life and especially so when it comes to developing new products. We developed these Vegan Organic Pestos to help people create simple delicious meals whilst exploring a new twist on a traditional staple with or without the addition of cheese!"

therealolivecompany.co.uk



Cheerful Buddha releases superfood hot drink blends

Cheerful Buddha has released a new range of CBD and superfood hot drink powders into the market in a continuation of its efforts to help consumers incorporate healthy ingredients into their daily diet more deliciously and conveniently.

Rich in nutrients, antioxidants and adaptogens, the new product range includes: Matcha Superfood Latte Blend, made with reishi mushrooms, ceremonial quality Japanese matcha tea, ashwagandha, vanilla and coconut milk powder; Lion's Mane Superfood Latte Blend, made with lion's mane mushroom, ashwagandha, turmeric, cinnamon, lucuma and coconut milk powder; Chaga Superfood Latte Blend, made with chaga mushroom, ashwagandha, ginger, lucuma, cinnamon and coconut milk powder; and Cacao Bliss Hot Chocolate, made with chaga mushrooms, lion's mane mushroom, ashwagandha, cinnamon and turmeric.

James Wright, co-founder of Cheerful Buddha, said, "We're delighted to see our new lattes and hot chocolate going into Holland & Barrett stores nationwide. We created these products as a simple and delicious way to enjoy nutritious ingredients that many people are eager to build into their daily routines. Taste, quality and functionality are our top priorities, and we've come up with four very special recipes that deliver on all counts. We look forward to building on this success over the coming months."

cheerfulbuddha.co.uk



PRODUCT NEWS

Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Indulgent launch from Mr Filbert's

Mr Filbert's has made an indulgent new addition to its range of premium snacks: Chocolate Orange Nut Mix.

A combination of rich chocolate, zesty orange flavoured mixed nuts, fudgy brownie pieces and dark chocolate coated peanuts, the new launch satisfies the consumer demand for indulgent snack options.

Mark Taylor, managing director of Mr Filbert's, said, "This new recipe is very on-trend with chocolate orange flavours being on top of most consumer lists of favourite food recipes. This four addition to the Mr Filberts indulgence range will add considerable growth to this snack sector, and we are already seeing substantial uptake for this product in its first month. A mouth-watering gluten-free snack made at our BRC AA factory in Somerset."

mrfilberts.com







Latest vegan chocolate launch from Kyoot

Vegan chocolate brand Kyoot has launched a fourth flavour into its now four-strong range of 85g dark chocolate bars.

Already in the range were Original, a smooth and creamy dark chocolate made from organic cacao, cacao butter and coconut sugar; Crunchy Salted Caramel, creamy dark chocolate studded with caramelised almonds and flaky sea salt; and Vanilla Quinoa Pops, a satisfying blend of aromatic vanilla and crispy popped quinoa.

Raspberry Pink Pepper adds spice to the range with its perfectly balanced blend of tart raspberries, punchy pink pepper and creamy chocolate. Every bar in Kyoot's range is organic, vegan, gluten-free and made from sustainably harvested cacao.

Noor Freiha, founder of Kyoot, said, "Kyoot 2.0 is ready to shake up the shelf and make you stop and stare. We've created delicious flavours and textures with happiness in mind: there is something exciting in each crunch, pop, and crackle."

eatkyoot.com

Peter's Yard releases Kashmiri Chilli bags



Premium snack and crispbread brand Peter's Yard has added a new HFSS-compliant flavour to its now three-strong range of Sourdough Bites.

The Kashmiri Chilli flavour Sourdough Bites are available in 24g and 90g packs, with the smaller pack containing 105 calories per serving.

Hand baked and seasoned with sweet ancho and Kashmiri chilli powder, the new product is made using carefully selected natural ingredients including Shipton Mill flour, British cold-pressed rapeseed oil and the business's own sourdough starter. They contain no artificial colours, flavours or preservatives.

Matt Hodgetts, Peter's Yard UK and export sales manager, said, "At Peters' Yard, we understand the importance of creating products that are HFSS compliant to appeal to even more customers. The Kashmiri Chilli allows for a bold flavour, while being less reliant on salt for savoury appeal. The 24g pack is a satisfying portion size and still only 105 calories. The calorie message was an important consideration for consumers when asked in Peter's Yard product development focus group research."

petersyard.com



New from Real Good

A healthier plant-based alternative to conventional barbecue sauce has been launched by Real Good, containing 70% less sugar and salt than conventional barbecue sauces.

The HFSS-compliant plant-based sauce is a 100% natural combination of Central American flavours including coriander, lime and chipotle chilli.

Elizabeth Jones, founder of Real Good said, "We are delighted to be launching this brand new sauce. Our Real Good Spicy BBQ Sauce recipe is in keeping with our low sugar and salt promise, with 70% less sugar and salt than other barbecue sauces. Our Smoked BBQ Sauce has proved very popular with our customers, so we are confident that a Spicy version will be well received."

realgoodketchup.com



Sandford Orchards announces cherry cider



Family-run Sandford Orchards, based in the oldest working cider mill in the UK in Crediton, Mid Devon, has released the newest addition to its flavoured cider range.

Wilde Cherry Cider (ABV 4%) is deliciously sweet and tangy, with a hint of Bakewell tart, and made using English apples and cherries.

Barny Butterfield, chief cidermaker at Sandford Orchards, said, "We wanted to expand our range of fruit flavoured ciders and we were looking for an English fruit to complement our English cider apples. I was reading up about the history of cider and came across a mention of Mazzard cherries being added to cider in the sixteenth century. Inspired by this, we created our own version and it seems those old cider makers knew what they were doing. We are delighted with our Wilde Cherry cider, our new interpretation of their old idea!"

sandfordorchards.co.uk



Cawston Press launches sharing glass bottles

Cawston Press has released two of its best-selling flavours in new 750ml glass bottles – designed to cater to the growing demand for larger at-home formats.

The Sparkling Rhubarb variant is Cawston Press's signature sparkling drink, and brings together notes of tart rhubarb with crisp apples and sparkling water.

The Sparkling Elderflower Lemonade is made with elderflower infusion, squeezed lemons, pressed apples and sparkling water for a light and refreshing option.

As with the rest of the Cawston Press range, both new products have been created using 100% natural fruit and sparkling and are ideal for drinking on their own or being used as a mixer for spirits.

Laura Hedderman, head of marketing at Cawston Press, said, "Our cans of sparkling soft drinks have become a firm favourite with consumers over the years and we're incredibly excited to bring that same quality pressed soft drink to people in a brand new sharing format. Whether it's keeping a stock in the fridge for the family, picnicking or parties with friends, we hope our new 750ml sharing Glass Bottles are enjoyed by many as a premium and delicious soft drink for all occasions."

cawstonpress.com

New festive tea hits shelves



Premium tea brand Babingtons has created a rich and festive tea blend to celebrate the upcoming Christmas season.

A blend of high quality black teas including Sri Lankan and Indian Assam and traditional Christmas spices such as cinnamon, cloves and ginger, the new tea also incorporates orange peel, red peppercorns, apple pieces, calendula petals, safflower and vanilla for an indulgent blend perfect for the festive season.

Chaira Bedini, owner and CEO of Babingtons Blends, said, "I'm delighted to be launching our most popular Christmas tea from the Babingtons tea rooms in Rome, into the UK. Purchased in our stunning caddies, The Christmas tea is makes for a perfect gift and stocking filler, to share and enjoy with friends and family."

babingtonsblends.com

"Keep your pack design on trend and on brand"



LAWRENCE BARNETT
WONDERLAND DESIGN

As brands strive to remain relevant to their consumers, to what extent should your brand be guided by current design trends and fashion? Such trends can help inform branding and pack designs to convey a more contemporary look and stay in tune with modern lifestyles.

Some trends will stand the test of time. Others may look dated in next to no time or turn out to be a fad. The trick is to use trends to make your brand more relevant and enduring without being susceptible to inevitable fashion changes.

We take a quick look here at some of those key trends and how they might be used to guide and influence packaging design.

COLOUR

Colours are subjective and most prone to change. Big, bold vibrant colours make strong statements and stand out. More earthy colours create a more natural feel and pastille shades can give a softer look. Stick to your own colour palette but, by all means, use trends and influences to help refresh your own colours on pack and that will translate well online.

GRAPHIC TREATMENTS

Pop-art, retro, anti-design and minimalism are just some design themes that are influencing design. Like colour, styles and treatments come and go. But they can help drive new creative ideas or influence how design can be used to better effect. The most important factor is how your brand's look can evolve in its own distinctive way, rather than closely copying a particular design trend or look.

FONTS

Font styles can play a huge part of a pack's design. They have become far more visual in their treatment. Whether it's a lettering style that's bold yet minimal or more of a work of art, use fonts to bring out key messages or to embellish brand or product stories. Your own way of using fonts will add to your brand equities for use on and off pack.

PRODUCT

Product visibility can create a more honest, transparent feel for the brand. Whilst for some brands this can be expensive, it could present an opportunity to reduce the amount of packaging used or find innovative ways to show more of the product. Greater product visibility can make a positive statement about your brand and its values.

SMART PACKAGING

Consumer experiences with your brand are being transformed by the use of QR codes. Make sure they can be seen and that they integrate with the overall pack design. And when QR codes are used, make that experience for the consumer a good and worthwhile one.

SUSTAINABILITY

This is clearly a long-term necessity and likely to get even more embedded in how we think about packaging and design. Many brands now incorporate their sustainability messages into their pack's design and use the design process to source more environmentally friendly materials. But even if your brand is not yet perfect in its sustainability journey, it is worth being clear about what your brand is currently doing to reduce its impact on the environment.

Trends should inform your packaging design. Be aware of them but don't follow them blindly. Allow them to guide your creative thinking and ideas – but firmly in the context of your own set of brand equities. Your brand must be enduring and not at the mercy of ever changing design trends and fashions.

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SUSTAINABLE FOOD TRUST



HANNAH ANDERSON
44 FOODS



THE ROLE OF **ENVIRONMENT** IN FINE FOOD

Boosting our sector's sustainability credentials is dependent on education across the board, finds Ellen Manning

Sustainability has become the watchword for businesses across the world, with the environmental impact of everything we do – including what we eat and drink – under scrutiny. Artisan food is often touted as top quality, sustainably produced and, dare we say it, a bit more 'virtuous' than other sectors. But is that definitely the case for the whole process, from producer to retailer? Many independent retailers are impressively close to their suppliers, building strong, long-term relationships, but do they carry the same environmental credentials? For some experts, there is more to be done, from talking about the issues more to addressing them practically as well as through woolly words.

We need to talk about sustainability

For Paul Hargreaves, founder and chief executive of speciality and fine food wholesaler Cotswold Fayre, we're still not talking about sustainability enough. "It's got slightly better, but in the vast majority of conversations with customers it all comes down to price, not sustainability. It has slightly improved over the last few years, but not enough."

While Cotswold Fayre runs an accelerator group for its suppliers to help them become B Corps, he said retailers have been slow off the mark to head down that route. They are starting to have conversations with some customers about forming a similar group, but he describes it as a 'drop in the ocean', predicting that the cost-of-living crisis won't help the situation as small businesses remain focused on price rather than sustainability – something he deems a mistake in business terms as well as environmentally. "I still think people at the premium end of the market should be focusing on the sustainable side rather than pricing. They need to focus on doing what they're doing, do it better, do it more sustainably, and they will still have those people who have extra cash to spend spending money with them. I think customers are going to get more demanding and are ahead of retailers in all this. There's very good data to show that consumers are factoring in sustainability in their buying decisions twice as much as businesses think they are. Consumers are scientifically proven to be more sustainable than the people that are selling to them think they are, so there's a mismatch there." In his view, retailers have a lot of catching up to do. "If I was speaking to retailers, my main message would be, 'you're behind the curve. You need to start doing more stuff and talking about it more and your consumers will appreciate that and buy more from you as a result'."

Collect the data

For Jason Gibb, co-founder of Bread and Jam, which supports food and drink brands to help ensure they have a future and dedicated a whole summit to what sustainability lessons brands can learn, providing customers with the full story when it comes to where their food comes from would help them to make the right choices. "Getting all food products and menus carbon footprinted is key to empowering consumers to make the right choices," he said. Gibb cites My Emissions, a fledgling company that aims to make climate data accessible to all companies, providing carbon calculations and labels to a range of businesses, including smaller food businesses, as a "game changer" in opening up such steps to smaller brands.

"We saw existing consultancies were charging thousands of pounds for product assessments, and knew if there was going to be any regulation, labelling, and general awareness there needed to be an affordable option for carbon calculations for companies," Matthew Isaacs, co-founder of My Emissions, told *Speciality Food*. In his view, the most important thing businesses in the sector can do is to get involved

> "Transparency is key. Whether that's transparency with your suppliers or with your customers"





in measuring and understanding their impact. "Once you understand your impact, it's usually clear how you can reduce this. We often find clients improving their packaging, re-thinking supply chains, and potentially reformulating recipes or changing suppliers to reduce their carbon footprint. This can sometimes also save them money."

A similar idea comes from the Sustainable Food Trust, which is working on a Sustainability Assessment Framework to help make labelling easier and clearer. "The idea would be that all products will have a sustainability score on them," said Patrick Holden, founding director at the Trust. "So you could go into a retail outlet and say, 'oh, what's the sustainability score of this cheese or this meat? It would be a bit like white goods – if you buy a fridge it's got an A rating on energy or something like that. We think a lot of people would buy more if they knew what it was. There's various schemes out there at the moment, but unless you've got a PhD in the subject you probably don't know the difference."

> "There's an opportunity for brands today to be a thought leader, carve a speciality within sustainability, and generally make a difference"

Sell the story

Putting the data out there is all well and good, but it's not just about presenting it passively, says Holden. "Sell the story. Imagine your customers want to buy food with a great story behind it – sustainable, as local as possible, and ideally produced by somebody who's got a name, or at least a story. You then sell the story." This 'story' is lost when food becomes a mere commodity, says Holden. "Cheapness hides the hidden costs, which is climate change, damage to the environment etc. So I think people in the small retail sector have to carve out a completely different niche, catering for the growing number of consumers who really care about these issues and want to buy better food."

Isaacs agrees that education is important – saying that once businesses have calculated their products' carbon footprint, they need to communicate it. "There's an opportunity for brands today to be a thought leader, carve a speciality within sustainability, and generally make a difference."

Be prepared for price rises

While prices are rising in every part of life, many still want food prices to stay the same, which leads to a state of "considerable confusion", says Holden. "There's enormous pressure on the specialist retailer sector to sell cheap food, because that's still the orthodoxy. So if you're going to get out of that, and say, 'no, we've got to pay the true cost of food, we've got to buy food from farming systems which are sustainable, which address climate change, which are nutrient dense, which are part of the solution', in all likelihood there's going to be a big cost differential."

The confusion doesn't stop at price, says Holden, but extends to what people think they should be eating to help be part of the solution. While livestock farming often finds itself in the sights of critics, Holden is keen to point out that sustainably managed livestock are essential to help farmers who have previously been part of the problem to move in a more sustainable direction, and also suggests that those keen to help the environment misunderstand what meats and products are the most damaging. "If you add all that up, it's very difficult for a small retailer who is trying to make their way through this confusion and these conflicting views."

Hannah Anderson is managing director of ethical online food retailer 44 Foods, which has a mission to make the food industry fairer through measures including cutting food waste and making its deliveries as environmentally friendly as possible. "Having spent decades behind the scenes in the food industry at major retailers, we had seen first-hand that producers and farmers often get the raw end of the deal," she said. "We knew that there had to be a fairer way to do things which is why 44 Foods was established – to ensure that farmers and producers are paid fairly."

Anderson seems to agree with Holden in that price rises are an inevitable part of ensuring that the environmental impact of what we eat – whether it's from a supermarket or an artisan retailer – is kept as manageable as possible. And for that, she also agrees that it's about retailers helping to re-educate those buying the products they sell. "As consumers, we've all become used to fast, cheap, convenient food culture but the prices that we've become used to paying at the supermarket aren't reflective of what it actually costs for farmers to produce what's in our trolley," she said. "As retailers, it's down to us to re-educate consumers by showing the people behind the food that we eat and the hard work, dedication and money that goes into producing even the most basic of household essentials. We work as a collective, partnering with farmers and producers up and down the UK in a fair, honest and transparent way. Part of this is allowing producers to set their own prices meaning that everything we sell is priced at a level that accurately reflects the actual cost of production."

Be transparent

Price rises, product changes and re-education are all phrases few retailers will welcome with open arms. But for Anderson, transparency is at the heart of making progress in this area. "Transparency is key. Whether that's transparency with your suppliers or with your customers. Take the rise in beef and lamb prices last year for example, which was a result of a rise in production and feed costs. We communicated this with our customers from the offset, speaking with some of our lamb and beef producers to explain the reasoning behind our rise in prices. We are also completely transparent that there is a delivery charge. It's vital to give consumers a better understanding of how the food industry actually works by breaking down things like pricing structures and production costs. It's not a dark art and it's time that we were more open with how the industry operates."



SPOTLIGHT ON: DTM PRINT

For Joanna Thomas, founder of Hokey Cokey Cookies, DTM Print's Eddie Edible Ink Printer has been an invaluable asset

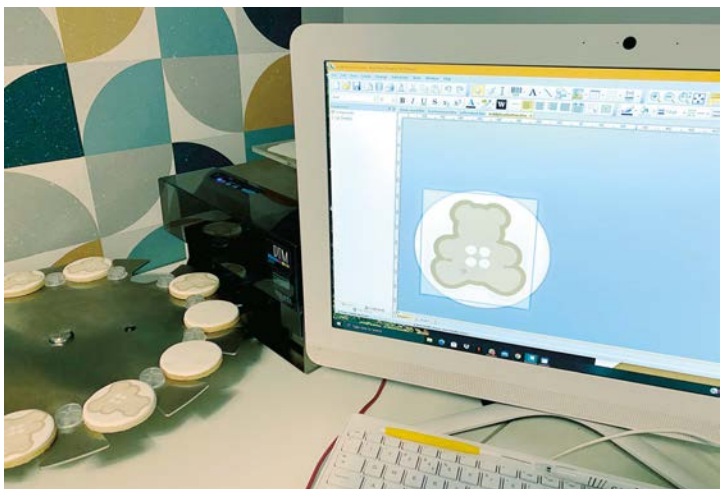


Across the fine food industry, within businesses of all sizes, technology is being embraced in order for them to better cater to a growing customer base. The Eddie Edible Ink Printer, created by US manufacturer Primera Technology Inc. and brought to the UK by DTM Print, is one such innovation – allowing small, medium and large-scale businesses to increase production levels and efficiency in their business without sacrificing their artisanal credentials.

Like many fine food businesses, Hokey Cokey Cookies began life around the kitchen table. In October 2019, Joanna Thomas's son requested themed cookies as gifts for his birthday party guests. Joanna obliged, making and decorating each cookie by hand, and they were enjoyed to such an extent that she started receiving requests to make them for friends and family members.

Within the next 12 months this popular hobby evolved into a business, with Joanna opening an online shop for bespoke iced cookies celebrating birthdays, weddings, Halloween, Valentine's Day and Christmas, as well as 'paint your own' cookie sets and corporate cookies.

She started out illustrating each cookie by hand, before deciding that the process was too resource-draining in terms of time and materials than she was able to comfortably allow long-term. Finding that edible ink pens were not as reliable as she had expected, with their ink drying too quickly and nibs breaking, she decided to seek out an automated alternative.





In May 2021 she discovered recommendations of Eddie Edible Ink Printer. The model stood out from the competition due to its ability to print in full colour directly onto cookies, biscuits, chocolate, marshmallows, macarons and many other confectionery items. Plus, the objects to print could be transported to the printer either manually or automatically via a carousel plate – another boost to Hokey Cokey Cookies' efficiency.

Tailored to fit

The Eddie printer has been tailored for professional and semi-professional users, aiding the increase in production and efficiency – and in turn, profit margins – as well as offering personalisation and customisation. "Eddie fits into my business perfectly," begins Joanna, "and this is down to the initial set up of the machine. It's quick, and easy installation meant I was printing cookies within an hour of initial set up. The software package is brilliant because it's so easy and straightforward to use. I also have the capacity to take orders of any size. 1 cookie to hundreds of cookies, I can fulfil the orders with Eddie!"



Eddie is now in daily use at Hokey Cokey Cookies, satisfying the demand for logo cookies in large quantities for corporate clients, 'paint your own cookie' sets and samples of new products. Indeed, Joanna is now producing 1,500 cookies per month – a big jump from her original output, and largely due to her investment in the Eddie printer.

"Eddie has allowed me to accept last minute orders, some within a couple of hours of being collected!" explains Joanna. "It's got the capability to print extremely precise, clear images that would take hours to hand draw and dry before packaging. Eddie also allows me to cater to customers' requests for large orders because of the volume it allows me to print in short amounts of time."

No compromise

Hokey Cokey Cookies' product range may be semi-automated, but this does not detract from the artisan touch that has been at the heart of the business's conception in late 2019. "Eddie doesn't take away from the cookies just because they are printed. For example, it allows me to produce background prints that I use as a base. I can then hand ice details to cookies that result in much more exciting, bespoke products." Eddie has given the business a boost in efficiency, too: "It allows me the time to add different layers of detail because of the volume I can print without waiting for each layer of icing to dry," explains Joanna.

As Joanna discovered to her business's benefit, Eddie offers a range of width and height options to suit various requirements. If used with the carousel feeder, which is included in the starter pack, Eddie can print on suitable food items up to 89mm in diameter and 25mm height. By switching to manual mode, users can extend the parameters to a 120mm diameter and maximum height of 27mm.

This flexibility allows for a number of food products to be printed, and a wide range of manufacturers to benefit from Eddie's functionality. "Speed and volume are the advantages of Eddie," agrees Joanna, "allowing my business to expand in terms of customers and product range. It's been incredible!"

Free lifetime support is offered to customers purchasing Eddie via DTM Print or one of its authorised partners, as well as three years warranty, DTM Print-approved products and customised all-in-one solutions.

> "Speed and volume are the advantages of Eddie, allowing my business to expand in terms of customers and product range"





THE GIFT OF GOOD TASTE

Italian food specialist, Seggiano, explains why a selection of Italian treats make the perfect gifts



The demand for high quality, artisan produce remains high this Christmas, although research shows many people are spreading the cost and stocking up early. According to Kantar research, grocery sales hit £11.7 billion last Christmas as Brits splashed out on luxury food and goods to enjoy both at home and for gifting to friends and family. Seggiano prides itself on offering a range of delicious, carefully sourced Italian delicacies that can meet a range of price points.

The 2022 Seggiano Christmas collection ranges from abundant hampers filled with favourites such as panettone, olive oil and balsamic vinegar, to smaller items such as its delicious Chocolate Salame and Fig Balls. For delis looking to capitalise on Christmas gifting opportunities, this year, more than ever, it is important to offer a choice of products to match all budgets.

The latest festive range from Seggiano will transport gourmands, bite-by-bite, to an Italian Christmas table, laden with beautiful artisanal delights sourced from producers across Italy who have been perfecting their craft for generations.

Ideal for decadent gifting to friends and family, or for simply stocking up on the finest nibbles to see your customers through the party season, this year's celebratory offering has the wow factor, featuring only the finest products from regions such as Tuscany, Piedmont and Liguria.

New for 2022 is the Seggiano Vegan Panettone. Crafted to trump all other plant-based panettone, it's baked in small batches, made only with natural products and it's the quality of the ingredients – the cocoa butter, vanilla, linseed flour and candied fruit paste, brought to life by the bakery's 33-year old mother yeast – that give it the distinctive Seggiano quality and luxurious taste.

Seggiano Hamper and Gift Box Collection are the perfect gifts for those hard to buy for friends and family. Joining Seggiano's luxury Premium and Classic Hampers this year are the new Gluten-Free and Vegan Hampers, enabling everyone to join in with the fun of feasting regardless of dietary restrictions. A Vegan Gift Set joins classic Seggiano favourites such as the Balsamics For Cooks Set and the Premium Oil and Vinegar Set. And to keep Christmas traditionalists happy too, other iconic favourites amongst the Seggiano gift range return by popular demand – from the indulgent Cioccolateria -chocolate dipped clementines or figs drenched in rum or cherry liquor, to Seggiano Panforte in traditional, chocolate or fig and walnut variants that work so perfectly sliced thinly and served with cheese, right through to the beautiful olive wood kitchenware range of stylish graters and chopping boards.

Seggiano has been sourcing the best Italian produce since 1985. All Seggiano products are sourced from specialist, innovative producers, who use only the highest quality ingredients and production methods.

Italians identify strongly with their local, regional foods and the Seggiano range represents the best of the best from all over Italy's wildly rich landscape and culinary heritage. Over 30 years on, Seggiano is still sourcing from all over Italy, direct from artisan pioneers who make truly delicious food, with simple quality ingredients.

> "Ideal for decadent gifting to friends and family, or for simply stocking up on the finest nibbles to see your customers through the party season, this year's celebratory offering has the wow factor"

TOP 5 SEGGIANO GIFT IDEAS FOR CHRISTMAS

1 **Panettone** - an all-time favourite, beautifully presented in stylish packaging and this year Seggiano has included a vegan variant to appeal to the growing number of consumers opting for a plant-based diet

2 **Cheeseboard essentials** - a definite winner at Christmas, provide your customers with access to an exciting array of organic digestive biscuits (Organic Gluten Free Buckwheat, Organic Damut, Organic Rye and Organic Spelt), superb Italian cheeses, our showstopping Baked Calabrian Fig Ball and Calabrian Fig Conserve and our stunning rustic Olive Wood Cheese Boards - and watch them fly off the shelves!

3 **Gift sets and hampers** - collections of luxury food items in either a gift set or more expansive hamper format always represents the perfect gift but make sure you stock a varied range to suit individual budgets

4 **Gluten-free and vegan gourmet finds** - be sure to stock up on specialist food choices to appeal to specific dietary needs such as the new Seggiano Gluten-Free or Vegan Gift Sets, Seggiano Gluten-Free or Vegan Christmas Hampers or vegan / gluten-free Chocolate Lovers Gift Box

5 **Stocking fillers** - make it easy for your customers to stuff those stockings with real Italian festive goodies such as individual Vin Santo Panettone, Panforte and must-have Chocolate Fig Salame

TOP TIPS FOR: FESTIVE FOOD GIFT SALES

Peri Eagleton at Seggiano offers her top tips for maxing out festive food sales this Christmas

1 This year Brits will be more cost-conscious so you need to ensure you're offering a selection of goods that cover a range of price points to meet all budgets

2 Small gift sets and hampers have universal appeal so you can be sure you'll attract a range of customers

3 Open your order book early this year so your customers can spread the cost of their Christmas purchases. This will also help you manage stock levels to avoid waste or leftovers

4 Source products from reliable suppliers that can deliver the quality you demand. With budgets tight, people want to know that the products they are buying are the best possible quality for the money they're spending

5 Stock a range of favourites that have performed well over the years, alongside a selection of new launches to attract those customers that like innovation. Ensure you have a range that caters for all dietary requirements, including vegan and gluten-free

6 Consider hosting a Christmas preview evening to showcase your gift range and promote what's new. This a great way to drum up early orders

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HOW TO SELL CHRISTMAS

Samantha Priestley explores how retailers in-the-know are approaching the festive season this year

COMMENTATORS



CANDICE FONSECA
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CREAKE ABBEY FOODHALL



PETER KINSELLA
LUNYA CATALAN DELI



MANDIRA SARKAR
MANDIRA'S KITCHEN



LYNSEY COUGHLAN
THE GINGER PIG



PAUL CASTLE
FLOURISH FOODHALL

We might be getting used to the unusual and expecting the unexpected lately, following one crisis after another, but as we emerge from a pandemic and enter a cost-of-living crisis, Christmas is on the horizon and it still represents a time of opportunity and positivity. All we have to do is find our way forward. Still, there's no denying that there are obstacles in our way. Fine food businesses might feel a little apprehension about their stock versus the buying confidence of customers, but that isn't the only issue. After a pandemic, war, and rising fuel prises, we might have largely forgotten about Brexit, but it is still having an effect on supply.

"Our Christmas orders are fairly conservative this year," says Candice Fonseca, owner at Delifonseca. "On the whole, we've noticed that a lot of our wholesalers have fewer products listed in comparison to previous years because they're playing it safe too. There are also definitely fewer items available from Europe."

Diana Brocklebank Scott, partner and director at Creake Abbey Foodhall in Norfolk, has a more local view on things, but is seeing pretty much the same issues.

"The cost-of-living crisis is already a very big issue for our rural location. We are seeing a one third reduction in trade this summer as day visitors are not spending the money to drive over from Norwich or Lincolnshire as they usually would. Those visitors who do come are much more price conscious, rather like the locals who we cater for in low season."

For Peter Kinsella, co-owner and founder of Lunya Catalan Deli, it's all about managing expectations and seeing the pathways ahead that customers are most likely to walk down. "We've revised down our forecasts as we think there will really be an impact, so we've reduced our ordering accordingly. "This has gone down 10% below our original forecasts. But we are expecting whole legs of Serrano ham to be very popular as they are such good value."

While predicting what customers will buy is never an exact science, the cost-of-living crisis does actually give businesses a better understanding of how people will be spending their money. When money is tight and people are cautious, businesses do at least have a framework to operate within. Peter is focusing on the positives in this, and offering customers lower priced items that will sell well.

"We're preparing our hampers, and we're expecting to sell the £30-£100 ones much more rather than the £120+ ones this year."

For Mandira Sarkar at Mandira's Kitchen, thinking about dealing with rising costs is a twofold issue. Dealing with the rising costs for the business while understanding the reduced buying power of customers is a sticky place to be.

"We are a small artisanal business, and unlike a supermarket with huge economies of scale, we have to deal with rising costs ourselves."

But there are always paths to forge, and being innovative pays off. Mandira's rising costs are her customer's rising costs, and finding ways to mitigate the impact of that on sales goes hand in hand with helping customers to feel less of a pinch.

"We are constantly ensuring our products are value for money and as we offer them in individual portions, and some come frozen, this goes a long way in reducing food waste. We are also planning to increase our bundles and monthly subscription range thereby offering additional savings to our loyal customers."

The gifts that keep on giving

Hampers are always a big deal at Christmas, and this year it's all about the choice businesses offer their customers. With many people struggling and gifting of food and drink items set to be on everyone's radar, food businesses can tap into this. For Candice that means being ready to give customers exactly what they want, whoever they are.

"Our hampers are split into three categories, we do bespoke hampers for customers, small ready-made hampers on our website and bespoke corporate hampers for businesses. They're always a popular go-to gift, especially for businesses, so we hope this continues."

But probably one of the biggest areas of growth this year is in the bottled cocktails market. Bottled, and canned, cocktails are 'gifty' while being reasonably priced and great to display on the shelves. While hampers are traditional and a mainstay of Christmas food and drink gifting, bottled cocktails are the new kid on the block, and they're causing a stir.

"We've actually upped our orders of pre-mixed cocktails," Candice says, "which seem to be very popular this year. We have a range of classic old fashioneds, expresso martinis and even a chocolate negroni."

According to research done by Future Market Insights, the bottled cocktails market will have grown by 10% at the end of this year.

It all comes down to cost

Unsurprisingly, in a cost-of-living crisis, everything is about cost. From production, to supply, to sales, to a customer's buying power, this year more than ever there's some penny pinching going on. There are various ways businesses can help their customers through these difficult times, and, as always, this can differ from business to business. It's all about finding the right paths. For Lynsey Coughlan, operations director at The Ginger Pig butcher and deli, there's no time of year more important than Christmas, and that's why it's so important to get it right.

"Christmas is the culmination of our year's work – it's often the most important meal of the year for our customers and we take that responsibility really seriously. Even more so in a year when costs have gone up significantly both for us as a small business and the overall cost of living for our customers – if they have entrusted us with such an important occasion, whether it's the centrepiece or the trimmings, it's on us to get it right."

Paul Castle, managing director at Flourish Foodhall in Bristol, agrees that businesses are feeling the struggle many customers are experiencing this year, and empathising, as that same struggle applies to everyone.

"We've already been informed about price increases for Christmas essentials like turkeys this year, which means Christmas may be more difficult than usual for many."



Diana's point about people not driving from one town or village to another as they used to, because of the rising fuel costs, is an important one. For many customers this year deliveries will be vital. Diana will continue to offer free local delivery within a five-mile radius.

At The Ginger Pig, they offer





delivery within London for anything purchased though their website. Although this will, of course, come at a cost for many people it might still be preferrable to taking out their own car.

At Mandira's, they offer click and collect for local customers and can deliver to any UK Mainland address.

Pre-orders could save Christmas

From here the path a business opens up can be different, but the desire to smooth the way in all directions is always the same.

"When people place an order with us for Christmas," Lynsey says, "we take a deposit initially rather than full payment which helps in two ways. Firstly it means that our farmers are guaranteed payment and secondly, it gives reassurance to our customers that their order is secure and all items for their Christmas meals are guaranteed. For instance, when an order is placed for a turkey, the bird is quite literally 'beak-marked' in the field by Richard and Jo Botterill for that customer. It's a system we've had in place with the Botterill family for almost three decades to ensure control on both sides of the orders, and is quite an achievement given the large volume of birds involved. Customers can place their Christmas orders from early October online, or early November in-store, so they have plenty of time before the final bill, which will already be partly paid through the deposit. The prices we publish in October will be the final prices for Christmas, so our customers will always get the best possible prices which we honour until the big day."

> "While hampers are traditional and a mainstay of Christmas food and drink gifting, bottled cocktails are the new kid on the block, and they're causing a stir"

The path to Christmas this year might be a narrower one than previous years, but pre-orders could be the thing that helps everyone along. Having those orders in place early can put meat on bones.

"We will be trying to get pre-orders early this year," says Candice. "Last year we couldn't do it due to the difficult circumstances that many businesses like ours faced and it caused us issues not having that sense of preparedness for the busy season. We will also be starting the hampers earlier this year as we foresee them being popular with a range of different demographics."

Pre-ordering is preparing and this year, more than ever, anything we can do to be more prepared is a gift. In a time of uncertainty, this one small act could be the thing that saves Christmas for producers, retailers, and customers.

"We'll be getting stock in as early as possible," says Peter, "so people can buy early and spread their buying from September onwards. "We're also looking at lower price point gift boxes."

At Creake Abbey Foodhall, they're being proactive about this and encouraging customers to be organised early. "A Christmas order form will offer Christmas items from October onwards so customers can plan ahead and purchase ahead if it suits them."

At Mandira's, they offer the same subscription option all year round. This is a way of building loyalty while guaranteeing monthly sales, and it's a flexible way for customers to buy. Giving customers the choice around when they pay and receive their products might not always help with Christmas, but it is a more continuous process. "Our monthly subscriptions can be paused or changed at any given time. A lot of our customers skip a month or so before Christmas and then use the money that is in their account to pay for larger family meals or party platters."

It's the little things

As we find our way through one crisis after another, Christmas might seem like one of the things that never changes. But of course, it does. While the turkey and trimmings are still hugely important, many people are doing Christmas differently, and this year they're looking for ways to do it in a cost-effective way. At Mandira's there's value in choice, and that means offering products with multiple uses, products customers can buy for a gift or use at home themselves. "We have some specially curated meals in classic, vegetarian and vegan for any special celebration, and plenty of gift options such as our Leftover Spice Kit. It has everything you need to turn leftover turkey into a three-course meal. And it's perfect for a gift."

This idea of food products we might previously have seen as something customers bought to enjoy at home themselves, now being bought as gifts for others, is a sign of the times we are living in. Food as a gift might be a treat while also being useful for many people this year. At the Ginger Pig, meat boxes that were once bought as party food might now be given as gifts. "We have a number of different meat boxes available to buy on our website and we will be re-launching our popular Boxing Day box and Trimmings box, which includes all of our customer favourites such as our pigs in blankets and pork pies."

Sustainability equals savings

Perhaps the best way forward this year is through sustainability. While the cost-of-living crisis is having an immediate effect, the climate crisis rumbles on and presents us with a longer-term issue. Businesses can address both of these issues in one, with a focus on sourcing locally and reducing waste.

"We are placing an emphasis on purchasing locally," says Diana, "and building on the reputation of the Creake Abbey Farmers' Market, which is now the biggest in Norfolk, using the Food Hall as a shop that locals and visitors can use to find Norfolk products all year round. This is good for food miles, provenance and traceability plus supports local farmers and producers."

For Lynsey Coughlan, reducing waste, not only for themselves, but for their customers too, is vital for the longer term as well as for Christmas 2022. "Our ethos at The Ginger Pig is all about using the whole carcass and we feel it's our duty to remind our customers of the cheaper cuts and forgotten roasts. This means we can help our customers to have amazing food over Christmas at a lower cost. Naturally we receive lots of orders for turkey crowns, which leaves us with lots of legs. Our expert butchers put a lot of work into making ballotines, which we sell in our shops in the days leading up to Christmas, making the most of the whole bird."

Finding the right pathway this year might be a little tricker than in previous years, but navigation is the backbone of any fine food business. Above all, Christmas is a celebration and however we do that, it's a path that leads to plenty.





COMMENTATORS



GEMMA BARTON
CARTWRIGHT & BUTLER



ASHTON MARRIOTT
COTSWOLD FAYRE



HALIMA MARKEY
SKOULIKAS



SAJID GHANI
SHELFNOW

THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING



Any Christmas spread needs a variety of sweet treats to make Christmas truly special, so go nuts with fruit cakes and puddings this festive season

Christmas is a time when fine food really has its moment – succulent turkey, sweet cranberry sauce and of course, indulgent Christmas puddings and fruit cakes. These desserts have all the ingredients that are classically festive, with plenty of fruits, spices and booze. But are traditional treats still at the top of the Christmas tree, and how can independent retailers upsell them this Yuletide?

Balancing tradition and innovation

It just wouldn't be Christmas without classic favourites, and as shoppers seek out comforting nostalgia from their food this festive season due to the financial crisis, traditional puddings appear to be the top choice.

As Gemma Barton, head of e-commerce and marketing at Cartwright & Butler, explains, "In one sense the pandemic and the state of things generally have had us thinking back to times gone by. All very Proustian and his madeleines – smells and tastes that are evocative of childhoods and times and places that gave comfort.

"Therefore, traditional fare is still very much on top of the customers' shopping list, albeit sometimes with a twist. Our overall best-seller last year was the Christmas Pudding with Orange Liqueur – a Christmas Pudding with a marzipan centre, while the number two best-seller was the traditional Christmas Pudding in both instances."

This is something Ashton Marriott, head of marketing at Cotswold Fayre, has also noticed. "We feel as though consumers are looking for something a little different, perhaps more exciting in taste but not dissimilar to the traditional cakes and Christmas pudding nostalgia.

"We're still seeing high demand for traditional cakes, yule logs, panettone and stollen as well as Christmas puddings, and current sales figures indicate they remain top of the tree!", she tells *Speciality Food*. "However, within our top 25, alcoholic flavour twists creep in such as Limoncello Panettone, Sloe Gin Fruit Cake and Spiced Rum, Date & Salted Caramel Cake."

For Halima Markey, business development manager at Skoulikas, customers are well versed in making their own traditions after three years of uncertainty and restrictions. She explains, "Consumers are always looking to try something different and start their own new traditions. Hence why we believe Panettone will continue to remain the top-selling Christmas cake, as it is very versatile and offers a range of flavours. "The classic panettone will still be the best-selling, followed by chocolate and lemon varieties. We are also seeing a massive demand for free-from panettone growing year on year."

This is something Sajid Ghani, co-founder of ShelfNow, has also identified. "One theme in particular we predict will be popular amongst consumers, is the option of healthier Christmas friendly desserts, such as winter fruits and dairy free," he says.

Stocking Christmas cakes and puddings

Because cakes and puddings tend to be ambient products with long dates, customers usually stock up on them well before the big day, saving their last-minute shops for fresh and chilled produce. This means that early planning is essential when it comes to stocking festive cakes and puddings in order to capitalise on this pre-Christmas trade.

As Halima explains, "The Christmas period is very important for retailers, and many retailers make the most profit during the Christmas period. But retailers will only get the most out of this busy season if they start planning now, as most wholesalers have started placing orders to make the most of the Christmas period.

According to Sajid, "Early planning is essential and during the summer months, retailers should already be





thinking ahead to finalise plans for product ranges and displays."

Halima adds, "Ensuring you have the right product ranges at competitive prices, and great customer service becomes even more important during the Christmas period, as well as knowing your product range. We all want to give the shoppers a reason to come back to their local fine food retailer this festive season."

For Gemma, it's about getting to grips with shopper behaviour."The last two years have seen many independent retailers forced to close due to lockdowns – so it's a year when we know consumers will be back. It's Christmas, so not only do they want to spoil their family but also themselves.

"We think Christmas will come earlier this year as more customers look to spread the cost over more months due to the cost-of-living crisis – with longer shelf lives – cakes and puddings play perfectly into this trend."

Successful upselling

Turkeys, cheese and mulled wine usually steal the show during the festive season, so indies need to know how to upsell cakes and puddings to elevate the Christmas dinner party experience.

For Gemma, successful upselling is a result of creating visuals that make the customer want to buy the products. She describes, "The Cartwright & Butler stockists that do best are the ones that create beautiful seasonal displays, so it feels like Christmas as soon as you step into the store. It's all about showcasing confidence and authority."

To do this even more successfully, retailers need to be sharing their work on digital platforms such as Instagram, Tiktok and Twitter. As Halima explains, "Independent retailers are using social media a lot more by sharing photos of their eye-catching Christmas displays, showcasing products in unique and fun ways.

"Eye-catching displays putting various gift-pack ideas together is a great way to up-sell. Positioning Christmas Panettone, cakes and biscuits next to premium drinks, greeting cards, flowers and wine will help encourage shoppers to more willingly treat themselves, family and friends."

Another tried and tested method of upselling is letting the quality and flavour of the product speak for itself. "Taste the cake and puddings yourself – this way you know first-hand how delicious they are and can communicate it to your customer", Gemma suggests.

Ashton adds, "Provide in-store samples to taste before/to encourage purchase. Create an inviting display in multiple locations, cross-selling brandy butter, cream and custard. If you have a café on-site, offering a slice of the cakes and puddings to go alongside a hot drink goes down well, and speak to the customers about the retail products available."

Keeping these tips in mind as you prepare your Christmas cakes and puddings offerings will help to push you towards successful selling in 2022 – here's to a Yuletide full of indulgent sweet treats!

> "We feel as though consumers are looking for something a little different, perhaps more exciting in taste but not dissimilar to the traditional cakes and Christmas pudding nostalgia"

STOCK CHECK



CARTWRIGHT AND BUTLER CHRISTMAS LOAF CAKE

This traditional loaf cake is decorated with golden and glacé glazed cherries and blanched almonds.

cartwrightandbutler.co.uk



LOISON PANETTONE AGRUMATO

An artisanal panettone enriched with five citrus fruits: citron, orange, lemons, chinotto and late mandarin, tied together with warming vanilla.

shop.loison.com/en



CARVED ANGEL APPLE STRUDEL CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Fruity apple strudel is combined with the traditional Christmas pudding for a warming, decadent dessert.

thecarvedangel.com



LILLYPUDS CHOCOLATE PUDDING

A luscious rich chocolate sponge topped with a decadent chocolate sauce – perfect for those customers who don't like traditional flavours.

lillypuds.co.uk



MINDFUL BITES CHOCOLATE VEGANETTONE

This vegan take on panettone provides an indulgent chocolate twist and uses plant-based, sustainably-sourced ingredients.

mindfulbites.co.uk



BUXTON PUDDING CO. JEWELLED TIPSY FRUITCAKE

A boozy fruitcake made with the best dried fruit and a generous amount of alcohol, topped with delicious cherries, apricots, hazelnuts, and brazil nuts.

buxtonpudding.co.uk





Dive into autumn with these award-winning regional specialities from across Northern Ireland

1 DART MOUNTAIN CHEESE COMPANY
CHEESE AND CHUTNEY

Dart Mountain Cheese Company, part of Tamargh Foods, is located in the scenic Sperrin Mountains in County Derry, Northern Ireland. Their range of artisan cheeses and accompaniments includes the Banagher Bold, a 'local ale' washed cheese aged for 3 months minimum, and Spirren Blue, a rich and creamy pasteurised cows cheese with blue veining.
tamnaghfoods.com

2 BRÓ
COFFEE

A range of specialist luxury coffee, locally roasted in County Down, Northern Ireland, using a unique dual roasting process that combines both drum and convection techniques. Bró are the first company in Ireland to achieve fully compostable packaging, which is rolling out to their wholesale packs by Christmas 2022, so your coffee offering can be green as well as black!
brocoffee.co.uk

3 GENESIS BAKERY
BREADS AND CAKES

Genesis bakery lies off the sleepy shores of beautiful Lough Neagh, where skilled bakers and creative decorators knead, roll, bake and pipe traditional Irish breads and fabulous small cakes. The award-winning breads are satisfying toasted or straight from the bread-bin and are equally delicious served with savoury or sweet toppings.
genesisbakery.co.uk



4 KETTYLE IRISH FOODS
STEAKS AND BURGERS

Kettyle Salt Moss Dry Aged cuts of quality meat are specifically selected to the perfect maturation expectation of the customer, chosen only from the best beef bred animals, and aged in Salt Moss chambers. In this process, deep-routed traditions and rich heritage are coupled with the brand's love of the Irish landscape to create an unrivalled passion for flavour.
kettyleirishfoods.com

5 MASH DIRECT
VEGETABLE-BASED SIDES

Mash Direct offer a delicious range of award-winning 'field to fork' gluten-free vegetable side accompaniments, grown fresh on the six-generation family farm with the true taste and texture of homemade cooking. The brand's signature dish, Mashed Potato, is steam cooked and mashed gently for a delicious fresh taste. Perfect whether it's enjoyed on its own, alongside a roast dinner, or as a pie topping.
mashdirect.com

6 MCCONNELL'S
IRISH WHISKY

Aged for five years, McConnell's is a fine blend of Irish malt and grain whiskies, gently rested in select bourbon casks, to bring beautiful overtones of vanilla sweetness, ripe fruits, butterscotch, and pepper spice. The handpicked ex-bourbon barrels that the whisky is aged in add a delicate subtle sweetness to McConnell's and provide a deep oak woodiness and light char to the finish.
mcconnellsirishwhisky.com

7 FOREST FEAST
CHOCOLATE DATES AND FIGS

Forest Feast North African deglet nour dates have a delicious chewy sweetness, which combines perfectly with creamy smooth peanut butter and a generous drenching of Belgian milk chocolate. Their figs come from rugged mountains and are gently sun-dried to lock in their goodness and juicy-sweet taste then drenched in 60% dark Belgian chocolate.
forestfeast.com

UPSELLING FESTIVE ACCOMPANIMENTS

Whether purchased for a festive cheeseboard or a Boxing Day sandwich, chutneys and pickles are essential Yuletide stocks. Here's how to upsell them for successful selling this Christmas



COMMENTATORS



BECKY VALE
TRACKLEMENTS



JEFF HIGGINS
THE WOODEN SPOON



SARAH WILLIAMS
COTTAGE DELIGHT



MARIA WHITEHEAD
HAWKSHEAD RELISH



MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI

The humble chutney is possibly one of the festive season's most underrated players. It's ambient, makes for a fantastic gifting item, typically comes in robust glass jar packaging and there is a multitude of quality companies developing great products. It has the power to elevate a perfectly curated cheeseboard, liven up cold meats and form the basis of a festive sausage roll, and what's more, the products tend to cater for vegans, vegetarians, coeliacs and many other dietary requirements, making it a product fit for all purposes.

While classic flavours continue to dominate the sector, consumers are looking for new ways to use their fruity accompaniments, as well as experimenting with modern flavour combinations. But how do you make sure you're stocking the right products for 2022's shoppers? We explore how to cater to demand this Christmas and reveal tips for upselling chutneys for uses outside the traditional cheeseboard offering.

The traditional route

When it comes to consumer demand, classic flavours will always top the charts, according to Becky Vale, marketing director at Tracklements.

"Christmas and chutneys are a marriage made in heaven", she explains. "This is a category which always delivers for retailers at Christmas irrespective of whatever else is going on. After all, Christmas is a time for indulgence and for finding those affordable treats which make it the most special and compelling season.

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that traditional flavours fare well during the festive season. Christmas is the time when people upgrade from standard products to top-end offerings. Particularly when the cost of living is in the news as much as it is currently, people tend to veer towards familiar flavours and old favourites which represent less risk", she added.

This is something Maria Whitehead, director at Hawkshead Relish, has also noticed. She tells *Speciality Food*, "With all the news being so gloomy, people are looking for something that takes them to comfort food, reminding them of old-fashioned flavours such as beetroot or rhubarb. Then there are the others who are looking for some decadence in a world of austerity and to have something that adds uniqueness and taste to add an extra dimension and layer of flavour."

According to Sarah Williams, marketing director at Cottage Delight, shoppers will be looking for something extra indulgent to celebrate with during a time of economic crisis. She explains, "Shoppers tend to trade up to more premium products during the festive season and will be looking to create the festive wow-factor with show-stopping additions to their festive tables and buffets."

"This Christmas, we are launching our first-ever Sparkling Christmas range which includes a range of gold-wrapped products with decorative mop-tops and festive names such as Perfect Party Pickle and Festive Fig & Port Chutney. These classic Christmas flavours accompanied by seasonal names will be sure to capture consumer attention and can easily be used to create eye-catching displays in-store", she adds.

Standing out from the crowd

However, consumers are still looking for excitement this Christmas, so ensuring your offering provides something different could be the key to festive success.

Becky explains, "The past couple of years has seen a shift in consumer demand towards brands which are not only top quality, value for money and offer interesting flavours, but also those which meet the demand for ethical and sustainable products.

"Every business needs to put sustainability on the agenda, as shoppers have demonstrated that they want products that tick boxes for product quality, and



> "Savvy retailers will ensure that there is a wide variety of choices available to select from, especially during the festive period when the consumption of chutneys and pickles is at its highest"

RETAILER INSIGHT



Mark Kacary, managing director at Norfolk Deli, shares five top tips for upselling Christmas chutneys and pickles

Is there anything that embodies Christmas more than a chutney (or two) with the festive cheese and charcuterie board? Probably not. Christmas chutneys are often associated with the heady aroma of cinnamon and spices. For us, it is all about offering local and seasonal produce. Our five tips for upselling chutney are:

- Introduce the concept of a chutney of the week (change these regularly) and place this near or alongside items it is ideally matched with.
- Be creative, use chutneys in any produce you might make internally. It needn't be too exotic – we use local chutneys which offer something significantly different to the conventional Branston in terms of flavours and textures in our sandwiches. You might be amazed at how often somebody might ask what chutney was used in the sandwich because they want to recreate it.
- Invite your suppliers to come and do tastings. Create a mini farmer's market atmosphere, either inside your shop or outside. Customers are creatures of habit, so make it your duty to break their habits from time to time.
- Create tasting notes to be displayed alongside the chutneys you want to promote/sell. Including details informing your customers what is in it, what it tastes like and what it would go well with takes away the guess work for customers.
- Use social media, you might be surprised how many people will come in and buy something because of a good picture or two!







environmental responsibility and which also support British farmers and growers.

"Another trend in the chutney and pickle category which Tracklements has been taking advantage of this year is the growing appetite for world flavours, which is why our latest special edition Date & Tamarind Chatni is proving so popular. It is made to satisfy the adventurous tastebuds of people who like to try new and alternative flavours but with the confidence of knowing they're produced by a trusted and sustainable business."

In addition to global flavours, shoppers are also looking for something to bring a bit of heat to their palette. As Sarah explains, "Savvy retailers will ensure that there is a wide variety of choice available, especially during the festive period when the consumption of chutneys and pickles is at its highest.

"As well as classic flavours such as Caramelised Onion Chutney, the trend for spicy flavours continues to rise, therefore introducing fresh twists on old classics such as our Spiced Tomato and Caramelised Onion Chutney or an Indian Hot Chilli Pickle will ensure there is a product on offer that taps into 2022 trends."

As Jeff Higgins, owner of The Wooden Spoon Preserving Company, puts it, "Consumers are getting more adventurous in their tastes and they are not afraid to try something new. Sometimes a little guidance, product knowledge and enthusiasm are all that is needed. As a retailer, don't be afraid to ask for a sample, crack it open and give it a taste."

Outside the cheeseboard

While chutneys and pickles are most commonly associated with the Christmas cheeseboard, these versatile accompaniments have a myriad of uses outside this traditional pairing. As Jeff explains, "Recent trends have seen consumers looking for innovative new chutney flavours, locally produced with more culinary uses rather than just being chained to the Christmas cheeseboard. We are passionate about our pickles and chutneys and try to incorporate them into our own cooking as much as possible.

"For instance, our Ruby's Lime Pickle, used as a marinade for a slow-cooked joint of Kentish Lamb, really helps cut through the slightly fatty nature of the lamb. Additionally, our Eve's Temptation Fig and Apple Chutney works wonders slathered all over a nice joint of gammon then roasted to perfection, giving a tangy, eastern twist to a Christmas classic."

A key way of helping customers to think outside the box this Christmas is to give your customers inspiration and use the marketing tools that fine food producers can provide. Sarah tells *Speciality Food*, "Inspiring consumers with serving suggestions and recipe ideas is something we always strive to achieve with the production of recipe cards and booklets, especially for products such as chutneys and pickles that are synonymous with key events.

"Retailers should utilise branded recipe cards to not only upsell particular products but to also inspire consumers who are looking for alternative uses for their favourite products throughout the festive period and beyond."

A focus on food waste

According to Sarah, alongside looking for new uses, "Consumers are becoming more and more mindful of waste and making the most of leftovers, something that we are also passionate about at Cottage Delight. Highlighting additional uses through recipe inspiration is a great way to reassure consumers who are worried about unnecessary waste. For Christmas 2022, we have created a Boxing Day Pickle Pie which not only uses up those leftover Christmas Day lunch ingredients but also includes our Perfect Party Pickle."

Finding alternative uses to avoid food waste is something Maria is also passionate about, as she explains, "What I would recommend is simple recipes of how else to use these products other than for the cheeseboard. Often they are given as great gifts but not every recipient is aware you can use these to add into sauces. For example, our Fig and Cinnamon Chutney with a bit of honey used to glaze the ham for Christmas would be fabulous, but equally you could add a teaspoon to a little oil and vinegar and create a



STOCK CHECK



THE WOODEN SPOON EVE'S TEMPTATION FIG & APPLE CHUTNEY

A fruity, festive number that works perfectly with a roasted gammon joint or on the side of any Christmas dinner.

thewoodenspoon.co.uk



TRACKLEMENTS SPICED PLUM CHUTNEY

Sourced from Serbia for a sweet, rich flavour, the plums are harvested in the middle of August when it's warmest for the best possible chutney.

tracklements.co.uk



COTTAGE DELIGHT PERFECT PARTY PICKLE

A classic Christmas pickle, wrapped in gold to offer something extra special this Christmas season.

cottagedelight.co.uk



THE BAY TREE SPICY TOMATO & CARAMELISED ONION CHUTNEY

With a tangy, sweet flavour, this chutney is perfect for spicing up any Christmas leftovers or cheeseboard.

thebaytree.co.uk



HAWKSHEAD RELISH BOXING DAY CHUTNEY

A lightly spiced chutney featuring apples, ginger and sultanas, perfect for sandwiches packed with leftover turkey and stuffing and Boxing Day cheese spreads.

hawksheadrelish.com



THE GARDEN PANTRY CELERIAC, APPLE & BEER CHUTNEY

A tempting festive chutney made with homegrown celeriac and local apples with gluten-free beer from the heart of Norfolk.

thegardenpantry.co.uk



THE ENGLISH PROVENDER CO. CARAMELISED RED ONION CHUTNEY

This chutney has a satisfyingly crunchy texture and adds a luxurious burst of tangy sweetness.

englishprovender.com



ROSEBUD PRESERVES SPICED PICKLED ORANGES

A fresh and piquant savoury marmalade warmed with cloves, mace and pepper berries.

rosebudpreserves.co.uk



STOKES SAUCES BEER CHUTNEY

A uniquely rich chutney made with locally sourced beer, root vegetables, apples, and a selection of warm spices.

stokessauces.co.uk



ADNAMS HOT TOMATO CHUTNEY

A rich tomato chutney full of apple and onion, with a fiery kick from red Habanero chillies and enriched with a splash of Adnams Mosaic Pale Ale.

adnams.co.uk

lovely seasonal salad dressing.

"Foodie customers will appreciate these tips and ideas and this was the reason for creating our Embellish with Relish cookbook, which uses several of our products to showcase recipes that can be used to create everyday and special event dishes to prevent jars languishing in the fridge until their sell by date has passed."

Upselling chutneys and pickles

Chutneys and pickles are perfectly tailored to Christmas gifting as they have a long shelf life, come neatly pre-packaged for convenience and perhaps most importantly, they are usually suitable for all dietary requirements. As Becky explains, "Another trend we've witnessed emerge in recent years is the need for food gifts and storecupboard staples which neatly fit into every kind of diet. From meat-lover to vegan and everything in-between, there's a Tracklement to suit."

Because they make the ideal Christmas present for any foodie, it is important that independent retailers stock a wide variety of flavours and gifting packs.

According to Sarah, "Shoppers naturally have a higher basket spend throughout the festive season, it's the largest gifting occasion of the year and consumers will be looking to treat themselves and their loved ones in the weeks leading up to Christmas Day.



"Retailers could look to host Christmas shopping evenings including tasting events, and at Cottage Delight we have a tasting kit that can be provided to our customers so that they have everything they need to host an interactive tasting session."

Where you display your products for Christmas upselling is also important, as Sarah adds, "Another fantastic way to ensure shoppers are picking up and purchasing products is to display them at key spaces throughout the store, especially on entry points, within food halls and as part of gifting displays. Placing chutneys and pickles near food counters is always a fantastic way of ensuring upsell too.

According to Becky, this is where a fine food retailers' expertise in merchandising and the gentle art of persuasive upselling comes into its own. "Specialist retailers know their shoppers and their shopper missions, they know best which area of their store is browsed, and which area is shopped for staples, where the display of gift packs will work best and where the grab and go impulse section is so it's a matter of matching the product to the area", she explains.

To ensure maximum chutney and pickle sales this festive season, focus on providing a bounty of flavour and help your customers to think outside the box for successful selling. After all, Christmas food is nothing without perfectly paired accompaniments!

> "Shoppers tend to trade up to more premium products during the festive season and will be looking to create the festive wow-factor with show-stopping additions to their festive tables and buffets"



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The Life & Soul of the Pantry



VENISON'S IN VOGUE

Eat a deer, save a tree. Sally-Jayne Wright finds meaty reasons for putting venison on the shelves

Low in cholesterol and high in protein, venison is so healthy, hospitals are trying it out on menus. It has less saturated fat than chicken and is a great source of zinc and selenium. In a 'Which meat is healthiest' league table compiled for *The Times Weekend* by nutritionist Ian Marber, venison came top. In the year to April 2022, the total annual spend within the venison market was £15.2m (Kantar), an increase of 20.3% compared with April 2019.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE TREND?

- The desire to eat 'less, but better' meat
- The desire to eat sustainably. Wild deer eat the leaves, shoots and bark of trees and 100 adult fallow deer can munch their way through 500kg of vegetation a day. Deer have no natural predators and have to be culled, so why not eat them?

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FARMED, WILD AND PARKLAND VENISON?

Farmed venison is reared for the table to be tender and tasty and has no closed season. It is currently only a tiny percentage of UK-shot venison but this is changing. Major retailers, notably Marks & Spencer and Waitrose, have responded to customer pressure not to import venison, out of season, from New Zealand. This may encourage more commercial deer farming in the UK and is controversial. Wild – and formerly wild parkland – venison is a by-product of population control. It is less consistent than farmed venison but some believe more complex in flavour. Standards of parkland venison have improved a great deal in recent years.

IS VENISON SEASONAL?

In theory, unless it is farmed. Many think the confusing game laws applying to wild venison – written before freezers were invented and rarely enforced – are overdue for review. One insider told us, "So much marauding goes on in forestry plots that some game dealers handle more fresh wild game in season than out of it." Deer stalker and charcuterie maker David Richards of Capreolus Fine Foods, Dorset, said, "There's enough wild and park venison in the UK that people need never eat farmed deer."

IF VENISON'S SO WONDERFUL, WHY DON'T WE EAT MORE? TOO POSH, TOO GAMEY, TOO PRICEY?

All of these. Cooking very lean meat takes skill. Unlike other red meats which are a standard species and age, wild venison can come from any one of about four different species (not breeds), which are different ages and different sizes. Food writer and venison expert Nichola Fletcher told us, "Many packs simply say: steak, medallions or pave, all of which could come from different muscles. A consumer can have a great experience one time and a less good one the next. It shakes confidence."

VENISON'S EASY TO DRY OUT UNLESS YOU ADD FAT, ISN'T IT?

Yes, and that may defeat your healthy-eating objectives. A meat thermometer is essential – internal meat temperature should not exceed 55°C.

THERE ARE CHALLENGES WITH LABELLING TOO, AREN'T THERE?

Our experience of two 'Parkland and Wild British' steaks, processed in Yorkshire and bought at Sainsbury's, was tasty but unsettling. We concluded from the pack disclaimer that they could have been farmed or wild, from anywhere in the UK, Europe or New Zealand. Nichola warns, "Quite a bit of New Zealand farmed venison magically becomes 'wild' venison which gives wild venison an undeserved reputation for tenderness."

HOW DOES THIS CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIES?

A YouGov survey for Red Tractor found consumers have greater trust in specialist shops than supermarkets. So, if the story's good, tell it. Example: Devon-based Farm Wilder cull deer from Forestry England to protect vital hedge habitat for blackcaps, nightingales, dormice and rare butterflies. Capreolus Fine Foods' venison chorizo is made sustainably from wild sika deer from the Isle of Purbeck.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE TREND

- In-store promotions during British Game Week, 7th-13th November

> "Farmed deer is controversial but there is also sufficient home-grown wild venison to eat it year-round"

- You can charge more for premium, venison ready meals than beef. How about ragu with pappardelle, meatloaf with roasted beets, or stew with prunes, chestnuts and juniper (*Game*, Kyle Books).
- Defrost frozen mince thoroughly and dry on kitchen paper before cooking or it will boil rather than fry
- In summer, split open quality venison sausages and serve on buns with salad
- Research shows venison shoppers are older. To convert younger customers, offer familiar fare – chilli and burgers rather than gamekeeper's pie

WHOSE PRODUCTS DO YOU LIKE?

Both Great Glen Charcuterie and Capreolus have garnered clusters of stars for their cured meats, including the coveted three-star Great Taste Award. The sporty and protein-obsessed will gobble up Ember Snacks Wild Venison bites – 97 calories per handy 37g pack.

WILL THE TREND LAST?

We think it will. There are signs of a slight dip in sales of plant-based meats (Mintel) and growing numbers, including failed vegans, looking for a sustainable red meat they can justify eating now and then. Farmed deer is controversial but there is also sufficient home-grown wild venison to eat it year-round. Whatever the source, most people would rather someone else did the prep, and that's where you come in.



VENISON IS **FIVE** TIMES MORE **LIKELY** TO BE **EATEN** AS A **TREAT** THAN OTHER **MEATS**

(KANTAR AND 56 DEGREE INSIGHT FOR THE SCOTTISH VENISON ASSOCIATION, SVA)



The Life & Soul of the Pantry

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TIDAL RUM



MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI



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CLUB SODA



RAISING A FESTIVE GLASS

Christmas provides a huge opportunity for drinks sales, but what will be the top tipples this Yuletide, and how can indies upsell them?

We can already hear jingle bells in fine food retail, and with only a few months to go until the big day, it's important to get your stock sorted before the festive season kicks off. This year, be sure to focus on the gifting opportunity as consumers look to treat themselves or loved ones after a difficult financial year.

Trending tipples

When it comes to what consumers will be looking for this festive season, spirits seem to be a steady choice. Mark Kacary, managing director at The Norfolk Deli, explains, "At first sight, I would think that in general very little will have changed from 2021, there's still lots and lots of gins to choose from, and even more flavoured gins, but there's also been a steady increase in the range of rums available."

The rise of rum as a trending tipple has been very apparent to Brad Wicks, head of marketing at Devon Rum. He explains, "I'd say the recent growth in the spiced and flavoured rum sector has encouraged more consumers to make rum the focus for big occasions throughout the year. Just like gin before it, rum's now enjoying a renaissance, and a real passion among consumers for artisan rums is driving this."

"Rum is right up there during the festive season, especially when it comes to spiced rums. Their warmth, richness, and complexity make them the perfect festive tipple", he adds.

Mark also sees a boost in RTD cocktails and ingredients as the cost-of-living kicks in. He tells *Speciality Food*, "During periods of austerity the popularity of cocktails comes to the fore and we've seen an exponential rise in the number of ready-made cocktail companies. As we put on an extra jumper this Christmas, the one bright spark we may all have is a hassle-free way to enjoy a cocktail or two."

For Brad, consumers are looking for something a bit more complicated during the festive season. He explains, "I think a combination of both classic and modern twists are needed when it comes to Christmas. Nostalgia and tradition play a big part during the Holidays, which means consumers will always be looking to enjoy a few family favourites. But modern twists are equally important.

"Sometimes, it's as simple as tweaking a classic to suit your tastes. We focus on this a lot at Devon Rum Co. when it comes to mixology; creating Christmas corkers such as our Espresso Rumtini, and our take on a traditional White Russian cocktail, which combines spiced rum with coffee liqueur, single cream and loads of ice!"

Non-alcoholic options

With mindful drinking on the rise, Laura Willoughby MBE, founder of Club Soda, believes consumers are looking to pace themselves this Christmas. She tells *Speciality Food*, "Half of all UK adults are looking to cut down the amount they drink, and at Christmas, they are becoming more conscious that alcohol affects quality time with loved ones. As a result, they are looking for alcohol-free drinks that have the same glamour and feel of celebration as their alcoholic tipples.

"There is now an alcohol-free equivalent for everything you would want this Christmas – whisky, amaretto, stout, even Irish cream – so there is no need to feel like you are compromising with non-alcoholic options."

In fact, according to Mark, providing plenty of non-alcoholic options makes business sense. "With Dry January following on from Christmas and there not necessarily being too much to celebrate between now and Christmas, getting the right mix of Christmas drinks could help the bank balance in the lead up to the slow trading period during Q1 of every new year", he explains.

Laura adds, "Alcohol-free sales are still growing at double-digit rates annually, and consumers are keen to add these drinks into their diet for a whole host of reasons. Recent KAM Media research shows that 37% of consumers drink low and no alcohol drinks at home at least once a week. It is clear there is demand."

Upselling Christmas drinks

When it comes to upselling, for Laura, it's all about knowing your products. She explains, "As a retailer, it's worth doing your own taste test, so whatever you decide to stock, you can genuinely advocate for the product. Knowing you personally like a product will give consumers the confidence to buy.

"If there is something you and your team really like, then talk directly to a brand for some extra stock to offer sampling in-store. The consumer is really curious about products in this space, and you can provide essential consumer education in-store. It is a great way to increase dwell time and spending across the board!"

She also suggests that it is a good idea to offer samples of non-alcohol versions of traditional Christmas tipples. "Providing an alcohol-free mulled wine to try means every customer can have a cup, and it will increase the spending across the store. It will also give you social media content, as you can show off cocktails, beers and wines for all occasions in both alcoholic and alcohol-free versions."

> "Christmas is an incredibly social occasion, one that has people stocking up weeks before the main event, whether that's for their own stash or for gifts"

TREND SPOTLIGHT: **RUM**



Harry Coulthard, co-founder of Tidal Rum, explains why Rum is the hottest spirit this festive season

RUM IS THE NEW GIN

While gin may have been the go-to a few years ago, slowly but surely rum is becoming more and more popular. A report by Campari Group UK earlier this year shows a growth of 1.7% in the last year, making the UK the third largest rum market in the world.

WHAT'S DRIVING THE TREND?

Propelling this increase has been a number of trends such as premiumisation, sustainability, and innovative flavours. The Campari Group Survey showed that over two-thirds of UK consumers are happy to spend more for a quality drink – with a third of these consumers drinking rum regularly, highlighting the opportunity for retailers to stock more premium, high-quality rums.

A VERSATILE SPIRIT

Rum is a wonderfully versatile spirit, which can be enjoyed in a variety of ways, neat or in a cocktail, which is why it's perfect for sipping all year round. It's this versatility that consumers are looking for when they buy rum, it needs to be able to suit all occasions, from Christmas parties to overdue catch-ups and long nights by the fire. Retailers should ask brands for drink recommendations or POS they can attach to the bottles; this will draw customers in and make them more likely to purchase a bottle.

At The Norfolk Deli, Mark believes that capitalising on the feel-good factor of buying local is the key to generating more drinks sales. He explains, "We focus on local produce which means that there is nothing alcoholic made outside of Norfolk. Many independent retailers will know of a local distillery, maybe even a local vineyard and almost certainly more than one local brewery to source from.

"Offer customers something they cannot find in a supermarket or a department store. To receive something made locally, something only available from a few specific locations adds value and interest value to the product. Speaking personally, I am more excited about trying a local bottle of sparkling than having yet another bottle of Moet."

The gifting opportunity

Getting your drinks offering right is of the utmost importance during the festive season, as it can lead to crucial extra sales as customers pick up something special to gift or impress their Christmas party guests with.

As Harry Coulthard, co-founder of Tidal Rum, explains, "Christmas is an incredibly social occasion, one that has people stocking up weeks before the main event, whether that's for their own stash or for gifts. To make the most of this lucrative time, retailers should make sure they have their 'Christmas Drinks' offering ready by the beginning of November. Additionally, with stores attracting a variety of customers, it's important to stock drinks for everyone, from everyday options to more premium ones."

Brad adds, "Consumers are always looking to gift something unique to their loved ones over the festive period. And with more consumers supporting their locals, independent retailers have a real opportunity to stock exciting drinks brands that won't be found on the shelves of big chain supermarkets over the Christmas period."

For Mark, this involves creating specially curated gifts that shoppers won't get anywhere else. He explains, "We're creating a range of hampers which can be bought online and sent or collected from our shop. Create something which matches and effectively creates a little story. Classic examples are combinations like Stilton and port, but offer something else, something more. We're creating party hampers, including everything you need for a party straight out of the box.

"But we're also curating hampers combining things like beers, cheeses and chutney, or gourmet products alongside quality still and sparkling wines. It's a great time to be imaginative and to give customers easy options to buy. It's always going to be easier for a customer to see & touch a combination of products you as a retailer have put together than it is to persuade them to come up with the idea themselves."

According to Laura, "At Christmas, people are also looking to gift for friends who don't drink, as well as to make sure they feel part of the action if they drive to a party. Customers want to spend on a product that tastes great and means they feel included in every festive occasion. Retailers would be foolish not to offer options for people to grab in-store." Make sure you're covering all bases this festive season with gifting options, non-alcoholic tipples and this year's hottest spirit, rum. And let's raise a festive glass to Christmas 2022!

> "As a retailer, it's worth doing your own taste test, so whatever you decide to stock, you can genuinely advocate for the product"

2022 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE **STOCK CHECK**



BURNING BARN RUM

This spiced rum provides a hit of toasted coconut, vanilla and molasses with aromatic allspice and a spike of chilli, followed by a long, warming ginger finish.

burningbarnrum.com



EDINBURGH GIN MULLED GIN LIQUEUR

This mulled gin liqueur boasts festive flavours of cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg with a tangy touch of orange peel and a billow of ginger for an additional warm kick.

edinburghgin.com



BELVOIR FARM MULLED WINTER PUNCH

A rich, spicy, fruit drink, handmade with masses of real elderberry, blackcurrant and orange juices, and mixed with real spices for a rich taste – delicious served warm.

belvoirfarm.co.uk



THE COCKTAIL SOCIETY SALTED CARAMEL ESPRESSO MARTINI

This ready-to-drink bottled cocktail is expertly blended with vodka, coffee liqueur, espresso and salted caramel for a match made in heaven.

thecocktailsociety.uk





Rowcliffe rolls out gift packs for Christmas

Importer and distributor of quality cheese and fine foods, Rowcliffe, is launching two new Christmas cheeses into its Clemency Hall range in time for gifting season.

The first of the additions is the Clemency Hall Victorious Vintage Truckle, a vintage Cheddar aged for 18 months now available in a 400g size for Christmas cheeseboards. Completing the range is the Clemency Hall Christmas Trio Pack which includes a selection of three festive cheeses: 18-month Vintage Cheddar, Truffle-infused Cheddar and Christmas Pudding Cheese with a flavour boost from fruit and spice.

Rougette Grilling Cheese launches in the UK

Elite Imports, the UK and Ireland's sole importer of award-winning Bavarian cheese produced by Kaserei Champignon, has just launched a duo of speciality grilling cheeses to the UK. Rougette Marinated Grilling Cheeses are savoury semi-soft cheeses, pre-marinated and available in two flavours: Herb Marinade and Bell Pepper Marinade.

Mick Acuta, sales manager at Elite Imports Ltd, told *Speciality Food*, "We're excited to see our Rougette Marinated Grilling Cheeses bring family and friends together. Now cheese lovers can enjoy natural, speciality cheeses in a totally new way."

Rougette is currently available from Carron Lodge, Rowcliffe and Hawkridge.



UK's leading organic dairy co-operative debuts trio of Cheddars

Omsco, the British farmer-owned co-operative dedicated to organic dairy, has launched its first branded range of Cheddar, created specifically for the UK market. Made in the heart of Somerset employing traditional recipes and techniques, the range uses Omsco farmers' milk produced by a farming system that is accredited to be free from the use of pesticides, herbicides, artificial fertilisers, GMOs and antibiotics.

Commenting on the launch of the new brand, Richard Hollingdale, Omsco's commercial director, said, "Our new Grass Roots Dairy Co. Cheddar range taps into the growing demand from consumers who care about the foods they eat, care about animal welfare, and care about the impact they have on the planet. Grass Roots Dairy Co. showcases all that is great about organic dairy and the sustainable and truly regenerative farming standards that our farmers are dedicated to delivering."

The new Grass Roots Dairy Co. range will be available through selected wholesalers including specialist cheese and dairy suppliers such as The Cheese Merchant and Proper Good Dairy.

Inspirational Cheese Retailers 2022: The Cheese Hamlet

CHEESE FOR ALL



While many independent food businesses are family-run, not nearly as many can claim to have created a bona fide family feel for customers, staff and suppliers alike. But that's just what The Cheese Hamlet offers in droves. Opened in Didsbury, a "fashionable Manchester suburb" in 1972 by the father of current owner John Axon – who has run the business for the past three decades – the shop has been a "real family labour of love," John explains. "Three generations of the family are still regularly involved, and we all enjoy sharing our passion for cheese and fine foods."

The team behind The Cheese Hamlet has always put the local community first as thanks for the support they were seen at the start of the shop's journey. "We try to repay the support they offered by being active with the local traders association, civic societies, charities and local schools that now educate some of our first customers' grandchildren and great-grandchildren," explains John. As well as being ever-present within the community it supports, The Cheese Hamlet ensures that it is welcoming to customers of all tastes and budgets. "Our range of cheeses vary from the traditional mature block Cheddars at the economical end of the price structure through to higher end cheeses such as Ossau Iraty, Beaufort and Valencay (to name a few) for the more discerning cheese buyers. Having such a wide array of cheeses allows us to appeal to multiple demographics of customers."

Looking forward, the team at The Cheese Hamlet has simple but admirable plans: "to continue to serve amazing cheeses and fine foods to our local and local customers." Exciting plans are afoot to promote the business's passion to a wider audience through tastings and online promotions, but something tells us that the business will remain a steadfast pillar of the community for generations of The Cheese Hamlet's Axon family to come.

Find out more about why The Cheese Hamlet was highlighted in our Inspirational Cheese Retailers 2022 *publication by downloading the publication for free from specialityfoodmagazine.com/issuedownload.*





Britain set to export raw milk cheese to Australia as part of new deal

Australians will soon be able to enjoy British raw milk cheeses as the new post-Brexit deal allows exports of unpasteurised products Down Under.

Australia had previously ruled the sale of raw cow's milk for human consumption illegal, but from September, 12 British unpasteurised varieties will be available for Australian consumers to purchase. Six varieties of raw milk cheese, including Montgomery's Cheddar and Sparkenhoe Red Leicester, were served at the signing of the deal at the Australian High Commission in the City of London.

Valerie Henbest, cheese expert and founder of the Smelly Cheese Shop in Adelaide, said Australia's dairy scene was missing the valuable contribution of raw milk cheese. She explained, "The difference between raw milk and pasteurised might not look enormous but it is a big win for cheese lovers. When you have a cheese made with raw milk, you have an absolute direct translation from the terroir to your plate." According to Henbest, heated milk in cheese production is killing "not only potential bacterias but mainly killing flavours".

While the UK-Australia trade deal has received mixed responses, this new export opportunity is definitely a win for British raw milk producers and cheese lovers everywhere.

NEWS IN BRIEF

HISTORIC BRITISH CHEESE MAKES A COMEBACK

Wensleydale cheese is gaining popularity again, as sales and demand rise after its Wallace and Gromit heyday. Last year, the Wensleydale Creamery in Hawes was sold to Canadian dairy multinational Saputo for £23m while supermarket sales of the crumbly cheese rocketed to £47.2m in 2021/22, up 16% on pre-pandemic sales, according to Kantar.

LIZ TRUSS CHAMPIONS BRITISH-PRODUCED CHEESE

Throughout the leadership battle, a speech made by Liz Truss in 2014 expressing her disapproval of British cheese imports has circulated the internet. In the speech, she remarked, "At the moment we import two-thirds of our cheese. That is a disgrace!" This was followed by her admiration for locally produced cheese as she once said, "When you eat a local cheese, you're enjoying the traditions, livestock and the landscape special to that place."

NORTHERN IRISH FARMERS INNOVATE NEW CHEESE

A new sheep's milk cheese, Northern Ireland's first, is currently in development and will be launched soon by an enterprising farming couple in Ballymoney. Speaking about the cheese, Wendy Dempster, one-half of the couple, explained, "We are planning a hard cheese using pasteurised milk from our own flock. It's an exciting idea we have been working on over many months."

"The Royal Warrant on cheese"



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

Cheese has been part of the northern hemisphere's diet for thousands of years. It is proven that the neolithic people ate cheese as dairy fat has been found on teeth and pot sherds. Cheese could also have helped power the Neolithic people to move those giant bluestones that form part of Stonehenge. Cheese is a great form of calcium, fat, protein and vitamins. This godsent food has formed a staple part of our diet for many millennia and really deserves some respect.

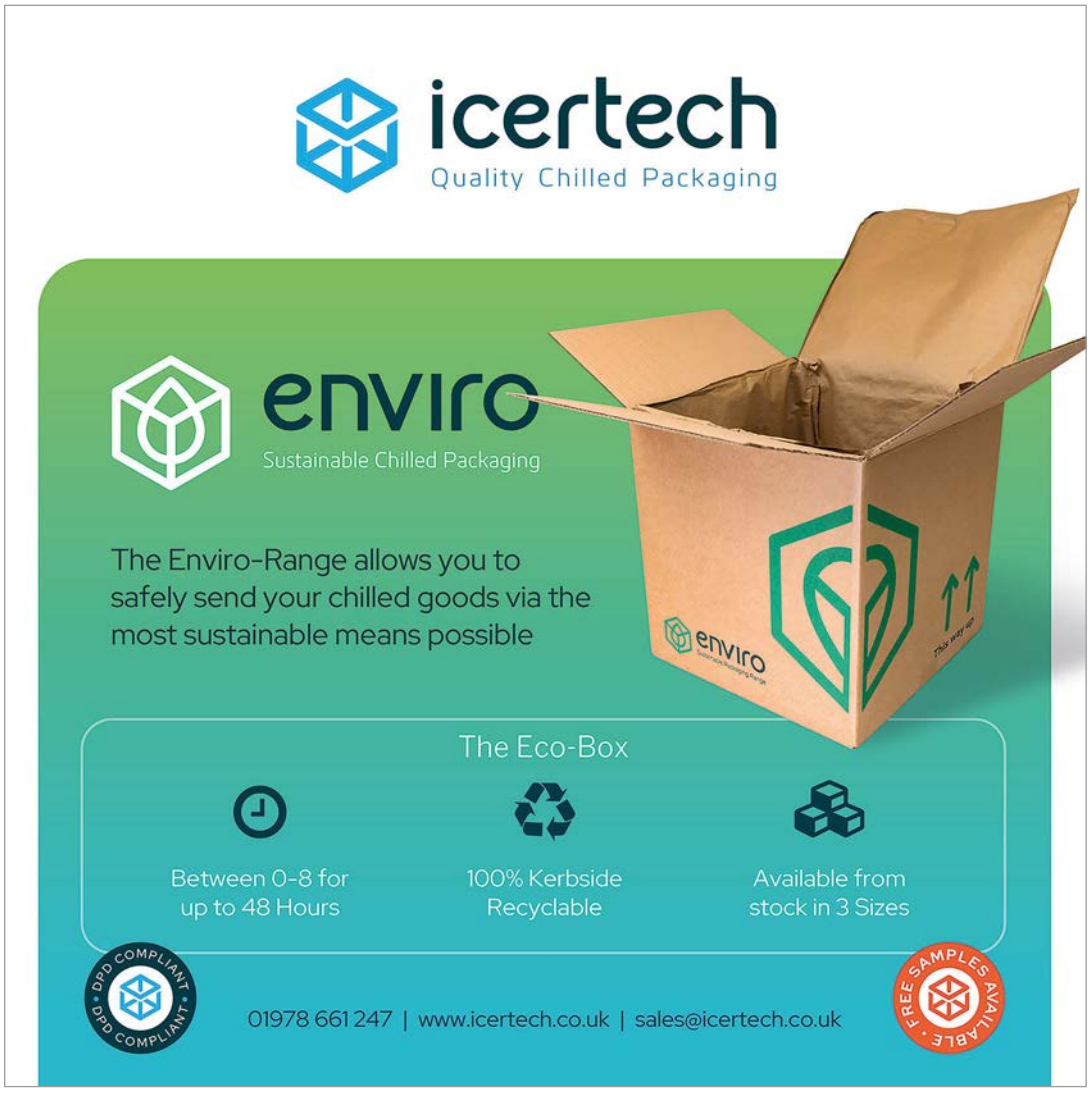
You may recall an article that I wrote about a mass-produced cheese manufacturer. It was recently fined £1.52 million for multiple pollutants being emitted into the local river. The pollutants killed thousands of fish and put at risk the health of the local community. What makes this more outstanding is this industrial producer also has a royal warrant. My column this month is to highlight the urgent need to educate people about where our food comes from. Manufactured cheese like the aforementioned has really had its day. Indeed, there are some great large producers that truly follow sustainable and ethical practices, but these are few and far between. The goal of these dairy giants is to make huge profits and pay as little as possible to make their cheese. Cathedral City has made £21 million in profit, it was also given a £3.2 million government shovel ready investment to extend its Cheddar and baby food production facilities. This truly beggars belief.

As a retailer do you not want to know where your products are coming from? We need to take inspiration from past cheesemongers and makers. For example Patrick Rance, who founded Wells Family Grocers as a cheese shop. Spend some time and have a look at what this man did for the artisan cheese world and how he, like me, felt about industrial practices. Modern renaissance pioneers of real cheese are careful to ensure that the produce chosen is only from exceptional makers. You only have to look at Neals Yard Dairy, Paxton & Whitfield and of course our little cheese emporium at No2 Pound Street to find true examples of considered and well-made cheese. There are great ambassadors who are extremely vocal such as Emma Young (The Cheese Explorer). Their contribution to the cheese world is immeasurable as we all strive to educate the masses about real artisan produce.

Probably one of the most important examples of education in cheese is the Academy of Cheese, founded by Mary Quicke and carefully run by Tracey Colley. This has allowed people to really get to grips with how cheese is made on an artisan and industrial level. It baffles me as to why HRH has allowed a Royal Warrant for Cheddar to go to an industrial producer. Perhaps an Academy of Cheese course is in order and would shed some light on how Cheddar cheese was made before the industrial revolution, and the production of block cheddars to feed the war effort.

The average lactation cycle for an industrial dairy cow in the UK is 2.5 years. Cows are generally all artificially inseminated at two-three years of age. They produce milk for an average of three lactations and are then exterminated at six years of age. When we look at these stats verses artisan it is clear that the artisan/farmhouse cheesemaker wins hands down on several levels: livestock quality of life, low carbon emissions, delicious milk... Farmhouse dairy cows (artisan) have longer lactations due to the stress levels being diminished. The topic of stressed animals in the industrial dairy industry is huge. I am pleased to report that the goal of the farmhouse cheesemaker is to reduce all stress and give the livestock the best comfort possible, in order to produce top quality milk that truly shows the myriad of flavours born through natural, loved and cared for pastureland. Why do we need to import fertilisers and feeds when we should only take from the land what is given? Deep rooted grasses and herbal leys are what our landscape is truly made up of. The days of quick growing short rooted grasses that benefit only from industrial fertilisers and imported feed are numbered. Too long has the population been misinformed about industrial production that scars the landscape and pollutes the natural world. Why would you want to eat cheese from an industrial producer that puts stress on the dairy cows reducing their life span? Do you really want to eat cheese derivative of manmade fertilisers, stressed animals and feeds? Or do you want a product from a farmhouse that is carbon neutral ethical and completely sustainable whist employing a local workforce and paying a half decent wage?

I believe the Royal Warrant for Cheddar needs some serious consideration on so many levels. It is our government that needs to look closer at British farming and stop throwing our cash at industrialists who's only goal is profit no matter the cost to livestock, humanity or the planet. We need to applaud artisan producers like the Ethical Dairy, Hafod and Stonebeck for their true connection with the land and being happy with subsistence.



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HOW TO CARE FOR CHEESE

Caring for cheese is a hugely important task in the fine food industry – one wrong move and your customers could be put off a certain cheese for life



With the cost-of-living crisis causing every penny to count, properly looking after your cheeses and gaining customer satisfaction could just make all the difference.

The fundamentals

Looking after your cheese products is one of the fundamentals of cheesemonging. For Stephen Fleming, owner of George & Joseph, "It's our responsibility to the cheesemaker to represent their product in the best way possible – we see ourselves as the cheesemaker's representative."

This is something that Gemma Ackroyd, owner of Cheeseboard of Harrogate, also strongly believes, as she tells *Speciality Food*, "We are always 'working' with our cheese. People probably think that once the cheese is on the shelf it will sell itself, but it takes a lot of looking after. If you think of how much love and time has gone into producing the cheese, then it is only right that we respect the producers and make sure their product is at its best when sold to the customer."

Stephen adds, "This starts with us understanding the best we to keep cheese before we sell it, what the ideal ripeness or ageing process is. We closely monitor all the cheeses we hold in our shop.

"Whole, hard cheeses are turned to ensure that moisture is evenly distributed throughout the cheese, and we keep everything refrigerated and track batches and use by dates where appropriate."

Julie Oxley-Hoyle, manager of Lewis & Cooper, also ensures that all her cheeses are monitored, as she explains, "We check the cheeses daily, having a routine to keep them in as good as condition as possible. They might need brushing, turning, or cleaning. We use cling film to wrap the cheeses to prevent the face from drying out, and change the cling film daily to make sure they do not sweat. It is a good idea to allow cheese with a natural rind to breathe."

A good customer experience

Caring for cheese is so important because if the product isn't at its best, the consequences could be detrimental to both your business and the customer's health.

According to Gemma Ackroyd, "There is a lot of competition out there so we have to make sure our cheese is in tip top condition, especially if the consumer is paying premium prices.

"We want the customer to realise that although we may be more expensive than the supermarkets, the quality is far superior. And that is why our customers come back for more. We can't cut corners for speed as each and every cheese needs to be nurtured so that it stands out on the cheese board."

For Gemma Williams, owner of The Little Cheesemonger, incorrectly looking after cheese is a case of potentially putting customers off cheese for life. She explains, "My father always tells a story about how he went to a cheese shop and bought some Stinking Bishop. He thought it was awful! He now knows it's a fantastic cheese, it was just unfortunate the shop wasn't caring for the cheese as well as it should be. It was likely either past its shelf life or had been far too warm and the ammonia was overpowering. If he didn't have a cheesemonger daughter, to this day he would never have tried Stinking Bishop again.

"I don't think he ever returned to that cheese shop again. You very rarely get a second chance to fix a mistake like that and you could make someone ill."

Passing on advice to customers

Giving your shoppers the knowledge they need to care for their cheese after the point of sale is equally as important as how you look after the product in-store.

As Gemma Ackroyd puts it, "There's no point in us going to all this effort if the customer is going to put the cheese in the back of the fridge and forget about it.

"We pass on our advice to customers so they can have the best possible tasting experience and as little waste as possible. We want them to be as enthused about their cheese as we are! And of course, happy, satisfied customers create repeat business!"

> If you think of how much love and time has gone into producing cheese, then it is only right that we respect the producers and make sure their product is at its best when sold to the customer

For Gemma Williams, "Giving care tips and advice from a consumer's point of view will only enhance their cheese at home and their experience with you in the shop. They are more likely to return to your business if they have received good advice from you in the past."

Julie adds, "Many of our customers tend to be very knowledgeable about cheese, but we remind them it is important to serve the cheese at room temperature to allow the flavours to develop and taste them at their best. It's also always good to remind people that cheeses might develop mould and that it's okay to cut it off, the cheese will be fine."

By using the best practice to look after your cheeses, and passing this on to your customers, you can maintain a happy customer base that keeps returning for more.



MEET THE CHEESEMAKER

With expertise spanning 100 years and a veritable feast of cheese in its range, it's no wonder Belton Farm has become an icon of the British cheese scene





As one of the foremost cheesemaking families in the British cheese sector, the Beckett family have proudly forged a path for themselves through the generations and are now true icons of the industry. 100 years since the creation of Belton Farm, Speciality Food explores the past, present and future of this bastion of British cheese.

The Beckett's started farming and making cheese on Belton Farm, located just outside Whitchurch in Shropshire, in 1922, and the family business has proudly continued production from the same idyllic spot since. In 2022, Justin Beckett, MD and the third generation of the family to hold the cheesemaking baton, maintains the same philosophies that have been integral to the business throughout its long history: using milk from grass-fed, free-to-roam herds from local farms – all located within a 25-mile radius of the dairy – to create much-loved cheese using recipes that have been tried and tested throughout its decades of cheesemaking experience.

Natural evolution

Since Stanley Beckett arrived at Belton Farm as a student in 1922 before taking on the tenancy and later buying the farm, the business has evolved throughout its 100-year history to bring together the expertise of generations past with modern technology. Many of the handcrafted techniques mastered by the team's cheesemakers throughout its history are still used to this day, while the latest technology ensures that every portion of cheese is of optimum quality and consistency. Once the cheese has been formed, they are matured in purpose-built cold stores before being carefully selected by Belton's exacting and highly skilled graders.

An award-winning range

The Belton team specialises in handcrafting British cheese with character and complexity, which boast both impressive flavour and tantalising textures. The range of classic British territorials, vat-made additive and contemporary modern cheese contains plenty of options to suit every palate, and includes Cheshire, Wensleydale, Lancashire, Caerphilly, Red Leicester, Organic Cheddar, Double Gloucester, Double Gloucester Onion & Chive, Sage Derby, Port Wine Derby, and its flagship brand Red Fox, which brings together Red Fox, the eponymous aged Red Leicester cheese with a cunning crunch, Smoked Red Fox, and White Fox, an aged White Leicester.

Today Belton Farm is widely recognised as an award-winning cheesemaker, and this quality and respect runs through its 10 decades – indeed, the team won its first major accolade in 1966 when it won the Supreme Champion title at the London Dairy Show. The same title was awarded in 2004, when a Traditional Double Gloucester won big at the International Cheese & Dairy Awards and again in 2018 for its Traditional Coloured Cheshire at the same awards.



In 2022 Belton Farm was once again recognised for its excellence; its Coloured Cheshire was named Reserve Champion UK Cheese at the International Cheese & Dairy Awards held at the Staffordshire County Showground, an event which also saw it being awarded 16 gold, 20 silver and 18 bronze awards as well as eight trophies. Having garnered more points than any other cheesemaker at the show, Belton was once again awarded the National Westminster Trophy for the 11th consecutive year.



Industry icon

It's not only Belton Farm's cheese that is recognised for its invaluable contribution to the British cheese sector. Justin Beckett, the third generation of the family to run the business and current MD, has been honoured with Dairy UK's annual Cheese Industry Award this year. Awarded in recognition of his tireless work promoting and supporting the UK's territorial cheese, as well as his industry leadership in roles including director of Farmhouse Cheesemakers Ltd, chairman of the British Cheese Board and the Dairy UK Cheese Group, the title secures Belton Farm's reputation as a leading light in the British cheese sector.

100 years on from its creation, Belton Farm has earned respect from cheese-loving consumers, retailers across the board and the cheese sector as a whole to become an icon of the British cheese industry. Here's to its continued success throughout the next century and beyond.



CREATING THE ULTIMATE FESTIVE CHEESEBOARD

For cheese lovers, a carefully curated cheeseboard is the centrepiece of any festivity. Here, cheese experts share how to create one worthy of party season



COMMENTATORS



TRACEY COLLEY
ACADEMY OF CHEESE



VICKIE ROGERSON
HOMAGE2FROMAGE



MORGAN MCGLYNN
CHEESES OF MUSWELL HILL



TIM COLLINGS
ROWCLIFFE



LISA GOODCHILD
THE COTSWOLD CHEESE CO.

> No Christmas cheese offering is ever complete without some British festive crowd pleasers

For most shoppers, Christmas just isn't complete without a cheeseboard. While some shoppers only indulge in an array of cheeses, chutneys and pickles as part of the Boxing Day feast (but do so without fail), for many the festive cheeseboard is a centrepiece in itself – worthy of its own slot in the meal schedule and as a snack throughout the 12 days of Christmas.

But thanks to the current cost-of-living crisis, not all shoppers will be looking to go all out this year. "With all the doom and gloom of fuel price hikes and increasing interest rates this year, Christmas '22 will either be 'let's celebrate and forget' or 'show me the value cheeses'," explains Tracey Colley, operations director at the Academy of Cheese. While budgets will be more stretched than usual for many of your customers, that's not to say that you should hold back on the upselling opportunity. "Christmas is a time to show off your merchandising skills, add those extra special cheeses to the range and hone your selling skills to upsell at every opportunity."

The shopping experience presented by indies will be more appreciated than ever by shoppers of all persuasions, as they visit speciality retailers for an enjoyable foil to a drab hour in a supermarket. "Buy whole cheeses to create a mouth-watering display and then show off your cutting and wrapping skills," advises Tracey. "Whole wheels are great for keeping the price lower and your customers can choose what size they need."

Versatility is the name of the game for cost-conscious shoppers. "Recommend full flavoured traditionally made cheeses that can double up for the cheeseboard and as an ingredient such as clothbound Cheddar, Comté, aged Gouda, or Gruyère," says Tracey, "and for the counter you will, of course, have ordered the classics; Stilton, Brie and Cheddar. Ensure you have variety to entice your customers to 'take one more cheese' and have back ups in case of supplier shortages.

An opportunity to indulge

Of course, whatever the budget, Christmas is the time of year for indulgence and for many seasonal cheeses – such as Vacherin Mont D'or – to shine alongside a glittering feast of spiced accompaniments that would only appear at this time of year.

Vickie Rogerson, co-founder of Homage2Fromage and the Virtual Cheese Awards, is firmly in the 'more is more' camp. "My favourite part of Christmas food is always the indulgence of a full to the brim slightly toppling over cheeseboard," she begins. "I'm a kid in a sweet (cheese) shop and I spend the whole of December curating the cheeses I want to include and invariably end up with far too many."

With the kaleidoscope of cheeses available it would be easy for customers – and retailers – to become overwhelmed and decide to not venture far from the year-on-year classics, instead strictly limiting themselves to a category-based board, but to do so would be to miss a valuable trick. "I'm a bit of a maverick and I don't buy into the theory that you should have one of each type of cheese (hard, soft white, blue, goats etc) as I think this is far too limiting. It's Christmas so have fun and choose all the cheeses you love; it doesn't matter if they're all hard cheeses, no one is looking. And for good measure, throw in a couple cheeses you've never tried before.

"My cheeseboard always has at least two Cheddars," continues Vickie, "and this year I'll go for Keens Vintage Cheddar which won Supreme Champion at the Virtual Cheese Awards and Lincolnshire Poacher Knuckleduster which is their seasonal three-year old Cheddar and it packs a punch!







Unpopular opinion, but I am not a fan of Stilton (sorry!) so instead I choose soft unctuous blues like Bavarian Montagnolo Affine or a Gorgonzola Dolce which should ooze onto the table. Blue cheeses always benefit from a squeeze of honey."

UK cheesemakers get a good outing in Vickie's ultimate festive cheeseboard. "I love my British territorials so I'll have a Sparkenhoe Red Leicester and Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire. My wild card will be a Fat Cow from Highland Fine Cheese Company, which is based in the beautiful Scottish Highlands. It's a holey nutty alpine style cheese which has a washed rind 'the colour of a crusty baguette'."

Accompaniment-wise, Vickie chooses to keep it simple and stunning with an artisan take on the classic oatcake. "Staying in Scotland, my new cracker of choice is made by Island Bakery based on the Isle of Mull. Their Oatcakes are delicious partners to cheese but do try their traditional Cheese Biscuits as well as they melt in the mouth."

Add sparkle to your sales

Morgan McGlynn, owner of Cheeses of Muswell Hill, also sees the festive season as the ultimate opportunity to go all out – classics, new indulgences and all. "Christmas is the season for entertaining, so the shop is full of the Christmas classics but also some exclusive cheeses to the shop like our 1000-day old Comté or cherry-stuffed Camembert. Not to forget the Champagne-doused cheeses to give your cheeseboard something a little bit special." As a cheese aficionado, Morgan has suitably decadent festive pairings, "Lancashire cheese with Christmas cake, Camembert with figs and honeycomb, and Langres with Champagne."

Once you have advised your customers on the perfect cheese combinations and accompaniments, it's time to share advice on how to make their cheeseboard display extra special. "Christmas is a time to go all out with an impressive cheese board full of amazing cheeses and sensational pairings," says Morgan. "Start with your cheese – it is the star of the show after all. My cheeseboards always start with a soft, hard, blue and a goats cheese, this covers all bases, and I add a smoked in for good measure too. Then I fill in the gaps with stunning charcuterie and amazing accompaniments like chutneys and pickles. Don't forget crackers and bread, and finish off with a beautiful garnish like rosemary to add colour and fragrance."

Morgan and her team at Cheeses of Muswell Hill get just as excited as their customers about the festive season, and ensure that customers never feel left out in the cold. "Forget Christmas – Cheesemas is the best season of the year! Christmas in the cheese shop is lovely as our shop is so little the queues go up to the top of the road, so we have dedicated staff that go up and down the queue while customers wait handing out cheese samples and mulled wine!"

Focus on the detail

At Holleys Fine Foods, the premium grocery distributor with an aim to enable more to enjoy outstanding foods, the focus is on additional details to make the season feel special. "Delis should offer different ranges during different seasons, as the consumers are generally trying to find something different to make their occasion special and memorable," begins Alicia Rogers, marketing executive.

"Of course, cheese is the most crucial part of a cheeseboard, but we believe this is only the case if placed alongside a range of outstanding accompaniments. Add some festive garnishes and chutneys to your selection, and for a festive tweak try

A CHEESE DISTRIBUTOR'S CHRISTMAS



Tim Collings, area sales manager at Rowcliffe, walks us through his ultimate festive cheeseboard

Christmas day in our house always consists of a log fire, good food and a long walk before the yearly ritual of frantically running around the house trying to remember everything before driving to a large extended family gathering somewhere in the Dorset countryside. "Did you wrap the presents?". "Have we charged the iPads for the car?". "Can I get all this in the car with a wife, two kids and a wet Labrador?", however, the last question that is always asked before setting off is "Have you remembered to pack the cheese?".

It falls on me every year, or rather I bestow it upon myself, to wow the family with new, exciting and smelly cheeses and it's a job that never gets boring. This year however things will be a whole lot easier thanks to Rowcliffe's exclusive range of hand cut portions in our premium Clemency Hall brand.

No Christmas cheese offering is ever complete without some British festive crowd pleasers and, as any good turophile knows, that always means starting with Stilton. I always opt for the wonderful hand ladled Colston Bassett Stilton. The hand ladling process results in a deep, rich stilton with a lovely creamy texture and a nice salty twang to the finish and is perfect with a glass or two of port! To compliment these, we have our popular 200g waxed cheddar truckles. The powerful and creamy, Victorious Vintage and the subtle Smoked Splendour are both absolute musts when putting this year's centrepiece together.

This year Rowcliffe are also very proud to have launched the wonderfully creamy Bavarian blue, Montagnolo Affine, and the lip smackingly good Vintage Red Fox to the independent pre pack market. For the first time these cheeses will be exclusively available in our hand cut portions to all our independent customers to make their lives easier. To compliment these, from Holland, we are also now cutting the award winning Truffle gouda. With its rich caramel notes and well balanced flecks of truffle this is a truly show stopping cheese that will silence any raucous dining table!

To finish the feast off I will be taking wedges of the wonderfully soft and unctuous, and somewhat stinky, Brie de Meaux Rouzaire and my favourite alpine cheese of all time Le Cret Gruyére. Exclusive to Rowcliffe, this single estate Gruyére is an absolute fruity gem with a lovely nutty finish!

BUDGET-CONSCIOUS BUYS



Tracey Colley, operations director at the Academy of Cheese, shares her suggestions for quality cheeses at purse-friendly and indulgent price points

BUDGET-FRIENDLY OPTIONS

Blues: Classic creamy French blues such as Fourme D'Ambert and Bleu d' Auvergne, award-winning Bavarian Blue Montagnolo, consistently good Wensleydale Blue, and for colour, Shropshire Blue cheese

Soft: Cutting wheels of Camembert Rustique, Brillat Savarin, Perl Wen and Chevre log

Hard: For an flavoursome all-rounder choose Duckett's Caerphilly, and for colour Rutland Red, or opt for Barbers 1833 Vintage Cheddar

SPECIAL TREATS

Blue: World Cheese Award champion from US cheesemaker Rogue River Blue, finely crafted Pevensey Blue, elaborate Stilton jars, baby Stiltons, and Italian Blu 61 washed in sweet wine and adorned with cranberries

Soft: Popular truffled Bries stuffed with cream cheese and the finest Italian truffles – try creating your own with your local soft cheese. Luxurious triple cream cheeses such as Finn, Elmhirst, Bix

Hard: Truffle Gloucester from The Cotwolds, Pitchfork, Cornish Gouda, Lincolnshire Poacher, Old Winchester, Winterdale Shaw and Rachel to name but a few

> "It's Christmas so have fun and choose all the cheeses you love; it doesn't matter if they're all hard cheeses, no one is looking. And for good measure, throw in a couple of cheeses you've never tried before"



STOCK CHECK



TRUFFLE HUNTER WHITE TRUFFLE HONEY

Luxuriously smooth texture, with a powerful white truffle aroma.

trufflehunter.co.uk



THE REAL OLIVE COMPANY ORGANIC KALAMATA OLIVES

Rich and fruity almond-shaped olives from Southern Greece.

therealolivecompany.co.uk



TRACKLEMENTS CHRISTMAS SPICE CHUTNEY LE PARFAIT

An unctuous combination of cranberries, Bramley apples and a host of festive spices.

tracklements.co.uk



ISLAND BAKERY THREE SEED ORGANIC OATCAKES

These oatcakes combine pumpkin seeds, linseeds and sunflower seeds.

islandbakery.scot



COLSTON BASSETT STILTON

A classic, award-winning Stilton. A must-have for any Christmas cheeseboard.

colstonbassettdairy.co.uk



STAG BAKERIES SOMETHING DIFFERENT FOR CHEESE

A rich and tasty cake, which pairs beautifully with a delicious cheese board.

stagbakeries.co.uk



SPARKENHOE RED LEICESTER

Nutty and sweet with a citrus finish. Clothbound and matured for six months on beech shelves.

leicestershirecheese.co.uk



TEMPUS KING PETER AIR-DRIED HAM

Cold-smoked over chestnut wood and spiced with black pepper and juniper, resulting in a sweet and nutty taste.

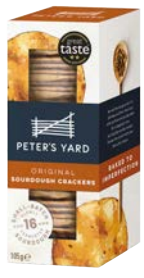
finecheese.co.uk



OLIVES ET AL SIMPLY BRILLIANT GRILLED ARTICHOKES

Crisp Italian grilled artichoke hearts, part of the Simply Brilliant range of storecupboard essentials.

olivesetal.co.uk



PETER'S YARD ORIGINAL SOURDOUGH CRACKERS

This craft bakery uses their signature 16-hour sourdough recipe and natural ingredients to create a range of hand-baked sourdough crackers.

petersyard.com

adding gingerbread, dark chocolate, or cinnamon nuts."

Thankfully, Holleys offers a wide range of accompaniments that are sure to add interest to any festive cheeseboard. From its West Country Legends range of Biscuits for Cheese – including Wholemeal, Beetroot and Charcoal – to Gourmico's rage of fine pates, from Chicken Liver and Traditional Pork or Wild Boar to Duck with a slice of Orange, Pheasant with Armagnac and Venison with Cognac, and Halkidiki's selection of pitted and stuffed olives, there's plenty to satisfy discerning fine food shoppers' palates this season.

Cashing in on seasonality is a smart move for independent retailers. "To keep customers interested we feel that seasonal ranges of products should be at the heart of any deli," explains Alicia. "Not only does it help to differentiate the brand within the season, but it keeps the customers on their toes while having to decide what to try this time!"

> "Recommend full flavoured traditionally-made cheeses that can double up for the cheeseboard and as an ingredient"

RETAILER INSIGHT



Lisa Goodchild, cheese expert at The Cotswold Cheese Co., shares her must-stock Christmas cheeses and accompaniments

WHAT TWEAKS DO YOU MAKE TO YOUR CHEESE SELECTION AS CHRISTMAS APPROACHES?

We have some Christmas favourites that appear in the counter from December. They are Brie de Meaux with Truffles, Blu 61 and Jonathan Crump's Single Gloucester with Truffle. We still carry the same offering but a lot more of it! In addition, we will have Petit Langrès and an abundance of Colston Bassett Stilton. Vacherin Mont d'Or is in season so we always stock up as it's always a big hit between Christmas and the New Year.

DO YOU BRING IN ANY ADDITIONAL SEASONAL CHEESEBOARD PRODUCTS

To accompany all these cheeses we source a fabulous Panforte from Sienna. This is showcased alongside our cheeses and is a big hit. The aroma from it is pure Christmas.

DO REQUESTS/QUESTIONS FROM CUSTOMERS CHANGE AROUND CHRISTMAS?

Our regulars always pre-order, as they don't want to miss out! We also try and source any special request cheeses that our customers want for Christmas. We find that the main question asked is how long will the cheese last – our advice is always to leave it, if possible until the week before Christmas, to buy. Also, quantities change, everyone wants bigger pieces!

DO YOU SHARE ADVICE WITH CUSTOMERS AROUND HOW TO PRESENT/CARE FOR THEIR CHEESES DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON?

We do share some advice, the main piece being if you are catering for a large group over a few days, don't put all your cheese out on the first day. Portion up, that way it won't look like a dog's dinner and deteriorate. Also, sometimes less is more; buy three big pieces of cheese rather than five small ones and decorate your board with nuts and fruit or panforte. My final piece of advice is to store in the warmest part of the fridge (salad drawer), this keeps it better and also stops prying eyes at midnight wanting a nibble!

DO YOU MAKE ANY CHANGES TO YOUR CHEESE DISPLAYS AROUND CHRISTMAS?

Every chiller is rammed with cheese! This is the month when nothing else matters. Our online cheese shop is incredibly busy so we have to cater space for that too.





LE GRUYÈRE® SWITZERLAND AOP

FESTIVE FAVOURITE

With its iconic flavour, impressive versatility and legions of fans spanning generations, Le Gruyère AOP is a smart stocking choice for cheese counters this Christmas

The most wonderful time of year is on the horizon, and with it comes some of the most important stocking decisions the independent retailer has to make all year. As one of the world's very finest cheeses, boasting centuries of history, an iconic flavour and undeniable popularity with shoppers of all ages, Le Gruyère AOP is undoubtedly a must-stock for Speciality Food readers.

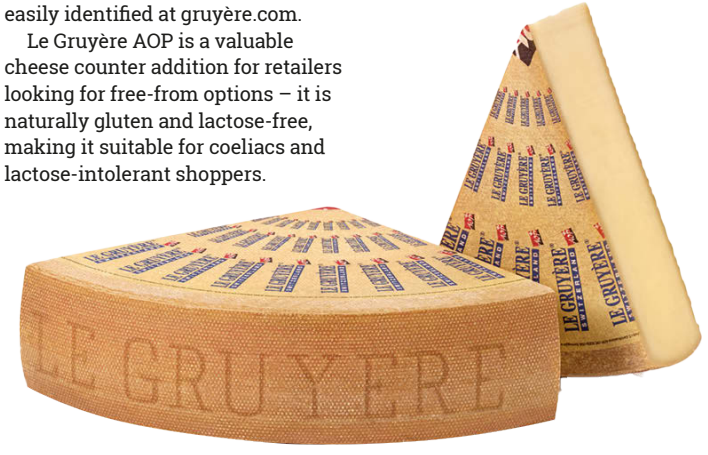
First produced in 1159, when the residents of the neighbouring Swiss regions of Bern, Jura, Vaud, Neuchâtel and the town of Gruyères, located in the canton of Friborg, came together to transform the milk from their cattle herds into cheese, Le Gruyère AOP has delighted cheese lovers for centuries. Throughout the 900 years since its original creation, makers of the classic Swiss cheese have passionately remained true to the historical production methods – which is why it was awarded protected name status across Switzerland and Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This move successfully protected genuine Le Gruyère AOP from lesser-quality imitations, and meant that the exemplary quality and flavour for which the cheese is known was maintained.

The 160 village dairies and 55 Alpage – mountain pasture – dairies which produce the milk used to make Le Gruyère AOP play a vital role in protecting the quality of the cheese. Its protected food name status means that makers are expected to uphold the rigid specifications required by the accreditation without fail, from the quality and source of the milk used to the production and ageing processes. Freshness is key, and assured by the proximity of the herds supplying each dairy – the distant from farm to dairy must be no more than 12.4 miles – and the speed at which the milk is used – it must be poured into the cheesemaker's copper vat within 18 hours of milking.

The delicious flavours for which Le Gruyère AOP is known belie the simplicity of the product. At the heart of each wheel is the milk of Alpine cows which in the summer feed on lush hillside grasses, which often contain natural herbs and flora. In the winter, the cows are fed hay – rather than silage – for optimum quality. Entirely natural and artisanally-made, every wheel of Le Gruyère AOP contains no additives or preservatives and is made using animal rennet.

British retailers interested in stocking Le Gruyère AOP can be assured not only of traceable provenance, but also of the authenticity of the product. This is achieved by the casein mark which appears on every wheel, along with the date of production. On a genuine wheel, the words Le Gruyère AOP appear, together with the number of the producing dairy. The dairy which produced the cheese can be easily identified at gruyère.com.

Le Gruyère AOP is a valuable cheese counter addition for retailers looking for free-from options – it is naturally gluten and lactose-free, making it suitable for coeliacs and lactose-intolerant shoppers.

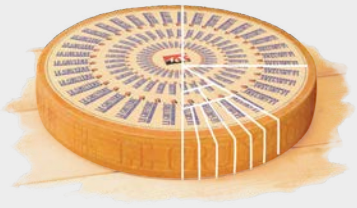


THE PERFECT FESTIVE CHEESE

The three ages of Le Gruyère AOP offer subtle differences in flavour

- **Le Gruyère AOP Classic** (aged six-nine months) is nutty, floral and sweet – perfect for lovers of milder cheese
- **Le Gruyère AOP Réserve** (aged 10 months and up) is flavour-packed and aromatic – complex and mature, it boasts a slight crystalline crunch
- **Le Gruyère AOP** can also be purchased aged 18 and 24 months – both options offer a powerful but well balanced taste

HOW TO SELL LE GRUYÈRE AOP



While the reputation of Le Gruyere AOP for high quality and excellent flavour precedes it, there are some selling tools Speciality Food readers should utilise when selling it.

To portion a wheel of Le Gruyère AOP, cut it in half using a cheesewire then into quarters using a double-handled knife. Halve these quarters into eighths, then cut the top half into three wedges and the bottom into six slices. Wrap the cut portions with clingfilm in order to avoid the cheese coming into contact with the air.

Understanding the versatility of Le Gruyère AOP will aid cheesemongers in selling it. There are three distinct varieties of the cheese available – see below – and all boast a number of serving suggestions. Of course, all can be enjoyed on a cheeseboard, but by recommending delicious recipes which showcase Le Gruyère AOP, including the Swiss classic, fondue, retailers will be sure to boost sales. Recipe ideas can be found at gruyere.com/recettes.

Upselling is a valuable tool in the independent's arsenal, and as party season approaches, smart stockists will be recommending drinks pairings for their customers to enjoy alongside Le Gruyère AOP.

DID U KNOW THE NAME AND PROVENANCE OF **LE GRUYÈRE AOP** WAS OFFICIALLY LISTED IN THE DICTIONARY OF ACADEMIE FRANCAISE IN 1762

> "As one of the world's very finest cheeses, boasting centuries of history, an iconic flavour and undeniable popularity with shoppers of all ages, Le Gruyere AOP is undoubtedly a must-stock for Speciality Food readers"

SCHWEIZ SUISSE SVIZZERA SWITZERLAND
Switzerland. Naturally.
AOP
Cheeses from Switzerland.
www.cheesesfromswitzerland.com

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs | Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corp. | K-FOOD KOREA

Fantastic Taste of KOREA

"Plant based fermentation and the beauty of patience"



This is the miracle of Kimchi and Jang; Korean traditional fermented condiments.



aT centre Paris invites you fantastic KOREA Foods and Beverage world

SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR 5-6 SEPT 2022 OLYMPIA LONDON

watch video hear

- **5th, 6th September 2022 (Mon & Tue) 10.00am – 18:00pm**
- **Olympia London 'GRAND KOREA STAND' on ground floor** (ST NO. 1310,1320,1330)

SFFF22 Main Programmes

- Korea Foods promotion trail
- Healthy & Vegan friendly Korea foods show & sampling by K-Chef (Q&A)
- 12 Korea Foods & Beverage exhibitors stands (F&B introduction, Trendy Korea foods sharing, buyer meeting)

Welcome

Healthy food lovers, Fermentation manics, Vegetarians & Vegans, Premium foods seekers, Trendy & unique foods explorers, Global food experience finders, Asian food-holics...

Participating products

1320a TULIP INTERNATIONAL



ALOE VERA

1320b Seyou Corporation



Canned Kimchi

1320e KOREA NATURAL FOOD



Honey Citron Tea

1320f JL Bridge



KIMCHI JAM

1330a Fresh Bell



PAPA ZOO'S Pear

1330b Young Poong



PINK ROCKET TOPOKKI

1330c KKOH SHAEM FOOD



Honey Citron Tea

1330f Histrade



JOA SOJU

1320c KIMNORI



Seasoned Seaweed

1320d SOOO GOOD



Shrimp Chips

1330d COSMOGY



ssalkkot makgeolli

1330e PANASIA



jin ramen



SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR 2022

Discover unique food and drink at one of the UK's hottest tickets for artisan food

On 5th-6th September, Speciality & Fine Food Fair will return to Olympia London to showcase quality artisanal food and drink products from the UK and around the world.

For over 20 years the Fair has been at the heart of the speciality and fine food sector, connecting independent retailers, speciality wholesalers, farm shop and deli owners and more with a diverse range of food and drink brands.

This year's event has a huge amount to see, taste, learn and explore, with a packed seminar programme on the Food for Thought Stage, invaluable insights into the drinks sector courtesy of Mixology School and the all-new Taste the Trends Kitchen, headed up by culinary consultant and chef Steve Walpole, who will exploring some of 2022's most exciting culinary trends through live talks and cooking demonstrations.

Visitors to the show eager to seek out exciting and innovative products will be spoilt for choice, with the Discovery Zone packed with new start-ups set to disrupt the sector, the Sustainability Zone full of businesses with the environment at the heart of everything they do, and the Drinks Cabinet showcasing the very best drinks products, from soft drinks and health drinks to the latest in low and no alcohol products and quality beers, wines and spirits.

Newly launched food and drink brands will also be highlighted as part of Pitch Live, sponsored by Virgin StartUp, which will give three exhibiting companies the chance to pitch their product to a panel of industry experts live on stage.

The evening of Monday 5th September will see the return of the Speciality & Fine Food Fair Awards, which launched in 2021 to celebrate excellence in the sector from food and drink products, individuals, sustainability initiatives and retailers.

What's new?

Speciality & Fine Food Fair is always a hotbed of new product launches, and this year's event is no exception. Aspen Mulling Spices will be unveiling a new cinnamon orange blend of their traditional mulling spices, excellent for use in baked goods and all-natural.

Taking the Pea will be tackling the cheese and onion snack market with their all-new flavour of crunchy coated peas, meanwhile Pipaillon syrups will be launching four delicious new flavours of organic syrup: Blackcurrant, Hibiscus, Lemon & Lime and Ginger.

Fieldfare, pioneer of the scoop-your-own frozen food concept, has also announced the launch of a new selection of delicious loose and individually portioned products to add to their already extensive and sought-after range.

Consisting mainly of single serve desserts and bite-sized savoury treats, the new range has been carefully curated to deliver products that will indulge the modern fine food shopper's desire for everyday luxuries and flexible solutions.

THE DISCOVERY ZONE

The Discovery Zone at Speciality & Fine Food Fair is a hub of new products from innovative food and drink start-ups, with all the participating companies trading for less than three years. Over the years, this part of the Fair has kickstarted numerous small businesses which have gone on to huge success and acclaim, such as gourmet popcorn brand Joe & Seph's, Hawkshead Relish and Two Farmers.

This year's line-up is jam-packed with innovative, delicious products across a wide range of categories, from sustainable spirits and quality cured meats to fiery chilli sauces and chutneys.

HERBY HOG FOOD CO STAND 2649

At Herby Hog they don't just make amazing flavours, they make amazing plant-based pig out flavours. They've created a range of products which take the hassle out of creating delicious meat-free meals. Their range of seasonings and gravies add sensational taste and flavour to your plant-based creations. All their products are 100% plant-based, GM and palm oil-free, with nothing artificial, and available in both retail and catering packs.

CASCOA STAND 4155

What happens when you mix the punch of espresso, the feel of chocolate, and the health benefits of berries? Simple: you get CASCOA. A solid, caffeinated, antioxidant-packed coffee bar that boosts your performance. A quick bite with a lasting effect. Containing 50mg of caffeine, CASCOA packs the same punch as your favourite energy drink or coffee order. The difference is that it's filled to the brim with natural fibres and healthy antioxidants. And because you digest it as a solid, the energy is gradually micro-released into your system. All peaks, no plummets.





BLUE AURORA STAND 2615

The story of Blue Aurora begins at Lutton farm, a family-run blueberry farm situated on the border between Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. Blue Aurora was born out of a desire to become more sustainable and reduce food waste on the farm. The blueberries used to make their range of English Blueberry Wines are the berries which are either slightly too small or too soft for the supermarkets, but are perfect for pressing to make wine. Blue Aurora is purely and simply made from 100% English blueberries, hand-picked from Lutton Farm.

TASTY MATES STAND 2603

Tasty Mates is a gourmet vegan sweet brand which launched in February 2021, the name and flavours inspired by friendship groups. Their unique flavours and colouring are all natural, the packaging is 100% recyclable, and a percentage of profits go to their charitable programme Mates in Need, which works with organisations such as Mind and Crisis. The business also cares deeply about its eco mission, with an ambition to use 100% biodegradable packaging.



SLEEP WELL DRINKS



Sleep Well is the natural bedtime drink, available in both dairy and plant-based options, that helps you relax and get a better night's sleep. There are three Sleep Well drinks available – delicious Vanilla or Chocolate made with whole milk and vegan-friendly Oat. All three have a nine-month shelf life and are suitable for the whole family. In 2022 Sleep Well relaunched in 100% eco-friendly, two-serve 500ml cartons which offer better shelf presence and are easier to pour and serve.
With valerian as its active ingredient, Sleep Well is already helping thousands of Britons get a better night's sleep.

Stand 2532

hello@sleepwelldrinks.com
sleepwelldrinks.com

STAG BAKERIES



Based in the Scottish Outer Hebrides, Stag Bakeries is a family-run bakery with a heritage dating back to 1885. Traditional recipes and time-honoured methods remain at the heart of every product their skilled craft bakers make. The result is a product range trusted on quality and provenance. Stag's signature product is their Seaweed Water Biscuits. Named Best Scottish Speciality Product in 2013, the product pairs a classic water biscuit recipe with a blend of three seaweeds to provide a truly unique flavour full of character. A great option for canapés, this biscuit provides a great platform for fantastic snacking combinations.

Stand 1601

01851 702 733 sales@stagbakeries.co.uk
stagbakeries.co.uk

SNOWDONIA CHEESE COMPANY



Snowdonia Cheese Company is a family business, founded in North Wales in 2001. Inspired by the lush greenery of beautiful Snowdonia in North Wales, they began by using fresh ingredients to craft natural, premium Cheddar and Red Leicester cheeses that married an extraordinary depth of flavour with a remarkable creaminess. They were an instant success in local markets and their multi-award-winning range is now enjoyed in over 25 countries around the world. Their newest launch Rock Star is a vintage Cheddar, aged in Welsh slate caverns in the heart of Snowdonia for a distinctively rich flavour.

Stand 1526

01745 360 246 info@snowdonia-cheese.co.uk
snowdoniacheese.co.uk

MEET OUR ECO HEROES IN SUSTAINABILITY ZONE

Launched in 2021, the Sustainability Zone at Speciality & Fine Food Fair provides a platform for producers who can demonstrate a substantial commitment to operating in a sustainable way, whether through the sourcing of ingredients, the production and packaging of the product, or the internal processes of the business. Producers looking to join the Sustainability Zone have to complete an application process created in partnership with experts in sustainable business practices. Here are just some of the innovative, sustainability-focused businesses at the Fair this year:

MAMA BUCI STAND 3153

Mama Buci produces award-winning, ethical, and socially responsible pure honey made by wild African bees from the Zambian Miombo forests. Their sustainable treetop bar hives are hand-built by Zambian locals, and are specially designed to make harvesting easier and kinder to the environment and ensure they produce the purest honey possible. They currently support over 7,000 families in Zambia by providing them with the hives, training and education needed to produce delicious pure honey.



CRUMBS BREWING STAND 3155

44% of bread made in the UK never gets eaten. That's such a shocking waste it inspired husband and wife team Morgan and Elaine to turn their back on corporate life and do something about it! They created Crumbs Brewing. Crumbs take loaves that would otherwise go unsold from their local bakery and turn them into beer. Each beer is brewed using a different type of leftover loaf, that way the style of the beer reflects the character of the delicious bread that makes it. Crumbs fight food waste and make tasty, unique beers at the same time. It's delicious beer, bread differently.





SQUISHED STAND 3152

Returning to the Sustainability Zone for a second year are Squished, a business on a mission to tackle wasted surplus fruit. Over one third of all food produced globally is thrown away, included 1.3 million tonnes of fruit. The company rescues surplus fruit from producers, puts it through their pioneering air-drying process and turn it into delicious snacks, jams and ingredients. They are proud that their snacks contain more of the named fruit than almost any other snack on the market: 55% in their energy balls and over 25% in their flapjack bites.

DOG AND SPOON DISTILLERY STAND 3150

Another business returning to the Sustainability Zone for a second year, Seb and Tony founded the Dog And Spoon Distillery with the desire to create fantastic gins in an eco-friendly and ethical way. A year later they completed the renovation of a converted grain store on an old farm in Alfreton, Derbyshire into a small batch distillery and in 2021 launched their first product, Science Project 6a. The business has a wide range of sustainability initiatives including planting over 600 trees in its Future Forest, using a 100% sustainably sourced energy provider, a biomass boiler and a custom -built closed water system for recycling water.



BAY COFFEE ROASTERS STAND 3157

Bay City Coffee Roasters are makers of multi-award-winning coffees. No fossil fuels are used in their roast process, and they use renewable electric energy through a traceability scheme. The coffee is imported in ways that support organisations designed to improve the lives of those involved in the process at farm level, such as Coffee Kids, Food 4 Farmers, and the International Women's Coffee Alliance.



> Speciality & Fine Food Fair is the annual event that has become a focal point in London's food calendar. It is an amazing platform for producers, suppliers and retailers to launch new products and share industry knowledge

BRUCE LANGLANDS, MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT AND SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR AWARDS JUDGE



SAMPLE THE DRINKS CABINET

As fantastic new drinks products continue to launch onto the market, the Drinks Cabinet at Speciality & Fine Food Fair is a one-stop-shop for visitors interested in everything from soft drinks and low and no beverages to quality spirits and beers from thriving independent breweries. At the centre of the Drinks Cabinet, the Inspiration Bar will see in-depth sessions across the two days from Mixology School providing advice and guidance for visitors looking to make the most of the drinks products they stock. Meanwhile, here's just a taste of some of the producers you can discover at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2022:

REVEREND HUBERT
STAND 839

Reverend Hubert's heavenly award-winning Summer Cup and Winter Gin Liqueur are hand crafted in the Cotswolds using the most divine real fruit and spices: from Amalfi Lemons to English rhubarb and Sri Lankan spices. Originally made in 1904 by Reverend Hubert himself using prize-winning fruit from the vicarage garden for his congregation's Christmas party and summer village fete, these recipes have been elevated by his great-grandson Thomas.

BEMUSE **STAND 845**

Bemuse is the completely new drinking experience based on Britain's most ancient drink. An innovative, modern, low alcohol sparkling range of delicious honey-based drinks, Bemuse is on a mission to reimagine mead for today's taste. Inspired by nature, brewed, crafted and canned in the UK, Bemuse is an exciting alternative to beer, cider or wine and can be enjoyed all year round, on its own or as an accompaniment to food.

EVERLEAF NON-ALCOHOLIC APERITIFS **STAND 1245**

Launched in 2019, Everleaf makes the world's most complex non-alcoholic aperitifs with depth, aroma, flavour, body and complexity which rival some of the greatest alcoholic brands on the market. One of the bestselling non-alcoholic brands in the UK, the Everleaf range includes three products anchored to different parts of the natural world: Forest, Mountain and Marine. These act as both inspiration for flavour profiles and sources for key botanicals.

NIO COCKTAILS **STAND 1241**

NIO Cocktails is driving a cocktail revolution: to allow everyone to enjoy world-class cocktails outside of the bar, whether that's at home, in restaurants, hospitality or entertainment venues, and in so doing, help create memorable experiences for everyone, everywhere. Made only with premium spirits and crafted by one of the world's best mixologists, NIO's menu of over 20 drinks allows everyone to pick and choose their favourite cocktails to enjoy whenever the mood strikes. The unique and iconic packaging marries function and form perfectly.

GREATDRAMS LIMITED EDITION WHISKY **STAND 1034**

Award-winning from its first dram, with one of its most recent award wins described as being "amongst the finest products in the world", GreatDrams introduce whisky drinkers to their next favourite. This is a family business bringing great quality, limited edition whiskies and whiskeys to the people, all at a fair price and never compromising on flavour. GreatDrams was launched with the aim to make great whisky more approachable and available. They are experts in finding incredible-tasting rare casks of whisky.

WHITEBOX COCKTAILS
STAND 1151

Whitebox Cocktails is a canned cocktail company. They approach each idea as a blank canvas which allows them to make what they believe to be the best possible version of each canned cocktail. Co-founders Ben Iravani and Pietro Collina have assembled a crack team of drinks specialists including former head bartender at Dandelyan in London, Alex Lawrence.







SOURCE DELICIOUS INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND DRINK

Each year Speciality & Fine Food Fair welcomes dozens of food & drink brands from around the world, from Greek olives and Italian truffles to South Korean snack seaweed and pure dark chocolate from Cameroon. Event manager Nicola Woods comments, "While Speciality & Fine Food Fair is an unparalleled showcase of innovation from UK brands, it's also a fantastic resource for buyers to discover exciting international food & drink products and sample amazing flavour profiles from around the world. This year's line-up of international producers includes some truly fantastic products eager to engage with UK retail and hospitality businesses."

ANTILLIA BREWING COMPANY, ST LUCIA **STAND 1120E**

Part of the Absolutely Caribbean pavilion at the Fair, Antillia is the only craft brewery in St. Lucia and acknowledged as brewers of the finest artisanal ales in the Caribbean. Founder Andrew Hashey comments, "We are extremely excited to exhibit our tropically inspired Caribbean ales at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2022. It is a great way to reboot our exports to the UK after two long years of pandemic disruption. We look forward to meeting new distributors, importers and retailers and sharing a taste of St Lucia with them."

ABERYNE **STAND 1830F**

French producer Aberyne has created the first 100% premium plant-based foie gras to satisfy the flexitarians, vegetarians and vegans that are conscious about what they eat but still want to enjoy a flavourful high-end product that is cruelty-free. Their Foie Green can be served cold but, more importantly, can be pan-seared.

JAPAN RICE AND RICE INDUSTRY EXPORT PROMOTION ASSOCIATION **STAND 2121**

This Japanese non-profit organisation conducts market development investigations and sales promotion activities related to the export of rice and rice related products as well as activities to build awareness and disseminate Japanese food culture. At Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2022 they will be showcasing a number of products including sake, rice flour and rice crackers.





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ENJOY THE BEST FRUIT AND VEG FROM EUROPE WITH US!

Join us on stand N.2030 to find out more about purchasing fresh, seasonal European fruit and vegetables, and the benefits this brings. You'll have an opportunity to meet the team and explore a wide range of produce, learn more about certified quality labels (PDO / PGI) that are already recognised in the UK, plus sustainability and quality standards.

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PRODUCT INNOVATION IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Each year Speciality & Fine Food Fair is a hub of new product launches, with producers using the event to showcase their latest innovations and taste sensations.





FIELDFARE, STAND 2523
Fieldfare, pioneer of the scoop-your-own frozen food concept, has announced the launch of a new selection of delicious loose and individually portioned products to add to their already extensive and sought-after range, including a smooth and creamy Vanilla Panna Cotta, Mac 'n' Cheese bites and a Smoked Salmon and Cream Cheese Roulade slice.

THE GORGEOUS FOOD COMPANY, STAND 2924
National fine food wholesale distributor The Gorgeous Food Company will be joined at the Fair by Atkins & Potts, a family-owned business which creates and produces speciality food. Atkins & Potts will be showcasing their new contemporary brand look DINE with Atkins & Potts.

ASPEN MULLING SPICES, STAND 2918
Apsen Mulling Spices will be showcasing their range of delicious and classic spice combinations, perfect for hot and cold drinks, and baking too. At the Fair they will be expanding the tradition with their all-new cinnamon orange blend.

PINKSTER GIN, STAND 1231
Pinkster Gin is made with fresh, locally grown raspberries and makes a deliciously dry G&T, with a hint of fruit and an exceptionally smooth finish. They waste nothing and turn the left-over raspberries into a delicious and mildly alcoholic Gin Jam. The company has also recently launched a lower ABV Pinkster Spritz base, which garnered top marks in the 2022 Spirits Masters.





ELSEWHERE AT SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR

CHEF DAN MOON
Foie Royale, supplier of an ethical and sustainable alternative to foie gras, will be joined on Stand 2005 by their chef ambassador Dan Moon, who will be on hand to talk through the product's applications in the professional kitchen.

THE HEBRIDEAN BAKER
Stag Bakeries will be joined on Stand 1601 by Coinneach MacLeod, author of The Hebridean Baker: Recipes and Wee Stories from the Scottish Islands, and showcasing their award-winning Seaweed Shortbread, Cheese & Chilli oatcakes and much more.

ABSOLUTELY CARIBBEAN
In addition to showcasing 10 fantastic businesses from the Caribbean Islands, Absolutely Caribbean will be running a competition on Stand 1110 for visitors to the Fair to win a trip to the St Lucia Distillers, along with an opportunity to explore their diverse portfolio of fine rums and the history that goes into each bottle of the St. Lucian spirit, first hand.

FDREVIEWS LIVE

Food & drink development support platform FDReviews will be holding a live consultation at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2022, offering food & drink businesses feedback on new product development, packaging, branding and much more.

More than 25 renowned industry experts will be on hand over the two days of the event to provide complimentary and confidential advice and guidance to food & drink businesses in pre-booked 15-minute sessions.

Speciality & Fine Food Fair event manager Nicola Woods comments, "This is a unique opportunity to get invaluable feedback from some of the most knowledgeable and experienced food & drink professionals in the industry.

"FDReviews is made up of experienced business leaders from the likes of M&S, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Harrod's, Selfridges, John Lewis and Fortnum & Mason who will be able to provide insights into key market trends and opportunities for your business, how well your product can fit into the market, the commercial viability of your offering and and the best next steps for your product development."

Learn more at specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk/fd-reviews-live.



BY RUBY



Seriously special, handmade food for your freezer. That's what ByRuby is all about. This award-winning brand sources the finest, ethical ingredients directly from sustainable suppliers. British free-range chicken, British grass-fed beef, and sustainably sourced fish are cooked with care alongside market-fresh vegetables by Leith's-trained chef Ruby, using absolutely no additives or preservatives, just like you would at home. It is frozen food like you've never seen before. Delicious, nutritious and nourishing, these all natural, high quality meals are for the modern day, busy foodie. ByRuby's fresh approach to frozen gives you convenience without compromise.

Stand 2531

Wholesale: alice@byruby.co.uk
General: milly@byruby.co.uk byruby.co.uk

GODMINSTER



Godminster are creators of premium organic cheddars in the heart of Somerset and won 'the Nation's Favourite Organic Product' for their Vintage Organic Cheddar in 2019. What they do on their farm reflects everything the Godminster cheese range stands for: sustainability, organic excellence, kindness, and quality. Visit stand 1820a in the Taste of the West pavilion to explore their range and see for yourself why these waxed organic cheeses are so highly commended. Make sure you try their award-winning Black Truffle Vintage Organic Cheddar for a true taste of Somerset luxury.

Stand 1820A

01749 813 733 info@godminster.com
godminster.com

LA TUA PASTA



This family business started in London 2006 with a passion for making authentic Italian pasta at their Pastificio. The team prides itself on making fresh pasta overnight, ready to be delivered to you in the morning. They supply some of the UK's most renowned restaurants and have won over 100 awards for their pasta and sauces, so you know your business is receiving high quality pasta. Come and discover La Tua Pasta's Deli and Hospitality range and see what they can do for you, you'll not be disappointed.

Stand 1002

0208 961 8024 info@latuapasta.com
latuapasta.com



FOOD FOR THOUGHT STAGE

The Food for Thought stage at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2022 is packed with actionable tips and tricks from food and drink retailers, trend insights from industry experts and unmissable debates on some of the most important issues in the speciality and fine food sector.

TUESDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER, 11:45-12:30: THE PERSONAL TOUCH: HOW TO INCREASE BASKET SPEND BY TAILORING YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Speciality Food editor Holly Shackleton will be joined by Artisan Food Club's Marcus Carter, Holtwhites Bakery's Kate Smith and Jan Robijns of The Broadway Deli to discuss the growing power of the personalised customer experience and how to pre-empt consumer needs leading to a higher basket spend and return visits.

TUESDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER, 14:15-15:00: WASTE NOT WANT NOT: TACKLING SURPLUS FOOD IN THE RETAIL SECTOR

WGSN's Jennifer Creevy is joined by Olio head of business development Liam Jones and Abbey Short, venue catering manager at Olympia London, to discuss the part food waste plays in the journey to net zero and how retailers and hospitality businesses can work to reduce waste and surplus food.

WEDNESDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER, 13:00-13:45: FANTASTIC FOOD FAILURES, AND WHAT WE LEARN FROM THEM

Stephen Minall of FDReviews.com will be pulling up a chair with Ben O'Brien of Sessions Kitchens, Joe Gailani of Bonraw Foods and Georgie Barulis of WOMA WOMA for a no-holds-barred session hearing about the times when things don't quite go to plan when launching a start-up, and what we can learn from these experiences.

WEDNESDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER, 14:15-15:00: TURNING THE HYBRID BUSINESS MODEL DREAM INTO A REALITY

Vhari Russell of The Food Marketing Experts hosts this discussion with Svetlana Kukharchuk of The Cheese Lady and Richard Nicholson of Cannon Hall Farm as they look into the lasting legacy of the pivot to online brought about by the pandemic, and how retailers can master the successful hybrid business model for years to come.



> "While Speciality & Fine Food Fair is an unparalleled showcase of innovation from UK brands, it's also a fantastic resource for buyers to discover exciting international food & drink products and sample amazing flavour profiles from around the world. This year's line-up of international producers includes some truly fantastic products eager to engage with UK retail and hospitality businesses"

@specialityfood

INDULGE IN THE TASTE THE TRENDS KITCHEN



New for 2022 is the Taste the Trends Kitchen, headed up by chef and culinary consultant Steve Walpole. Across the two days of the Fair, Steve will be guiding visitors through some of the most exciting food and drink trends of 2022 with live cooking demonstrations and interviews with key producers.

The Kitchen will also showcase partner content from the Guild of Fine Food, who will be presenting a session with the Great Taste Supreme Champion, and the World Charcuterie Awards, who will be highlighting some fantastic and flexible cured meat products at the forefront of global innovation in the category.

Steve comments, "I can't wait to be back at Speciality & Fine Food Fair, cooking up a storm with some amazing guest speakers. Join us on 5th-6th September to discover some of the most exciting trends in food and drink and to sample some of the best products on offer at this year's Fair."

Other sessions at the Taste the Trends Kitchen will include a look at the concept of ethical eating and what this means in practice, striving for perfection in plant-based products, a look at the influences of Japanese and Korean food and drink on Western cuisine and much more. There will also be a takeover from Grano Padano, best-selling PDO cheese in the world, who will be demonstrating some of the key uses and marketing messages for this unique cheese.

NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: Olympia London
WHEN: 5th-6th September 2022
WEB: specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk

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HOW TO BECOME A DESTINATION RETAILER

Ellen Manning finds that consistency, community and a strong USP are a surefire recipe for success

COMMENTATORS



RUSSELL ALLEN
AUBREY ALLEN



WILL DOCKER
BALGROVE LARDER



ROBERT HUNNINGHER
HUMDINGERS CATERING & BAKERY

Artisan food is often synonymous with shopping local – picking up treats from a local deli, meat from your butcher, or bread from a bakery. But some fine food retailers have built up such a reputation that they've become destinations in their own right – attracting people from across the country to experience what they offer. Say 'Daylesford' to any food lover and they'll know what you're talking about – they've probably made a pilgrimage there at some stage, or at least are planning to. But while most retailers would welcome the chance to attract people from hundreds of miles away, it's not always easy. Standing out from the crowd on a local level is hard enough, but becoming a 'destination retailer' is often the product of a jigsaw puzzle of different elements.

Consistency

For Russell Allen, managing director of Aubrey Allen in Leamington Spa, it's all about consistency. The business has built up a reputation as one of the best butchers in the country but also offers a deli and cheesemongers from its flagship store in Leamington, attracting people from far and wide. Their longstanding reputation may help get people through the doors, but Allen's advice to less well-established businesses is to 'stick to your guns' and focus on consistency. "When you start out, you perhaps have lots of different ideas about the sort of products you want to put on," he said. "You might be a butcher, you might be a deli, you might do sandwiches – you might do all of those things. It's about deciding firstly what it is that you do and sticking to it." That includes ensuring that the broad choice and impressive array of products that's showcased when you first open continues, rather than dwindling once the initial surge of footfall dies down. "I see a lot of shops start off well, they open up with a fanfare and have full stock and full fridges. And of course, when you're the new person in town, everyone goes in to see you. But on a Wednesday in October, for example, you might not be selling anything so you end up putting less and less produce out. Then you don't have the range so customers come in but you don't have the products they want. So, I think it's about sticking to your guns which is difficult when you start off because you need to have the budget to put a show out when there's no custom. You have to be as good on a Wednesday as you are on a Saturday. The consistency of going 'right, okay, it's quiet, but we still have to have some product out there, even though it's probably going to cost us or cause waste'."

At Balgove Larder just outside St Andrews in Fife, ongoing efforts have seen it grow and expand to become a destination not just for people in Fife but visitors from further afield. "We started Balgove Larder to connect people with the farmers and fields that their food comes from and wherever possible we use home grown, home reared and local produce," said co-founder Will Docker. "We wanted to be a destination for the local people of Fife and visitors to the region alike. By converting former farm buildings on the Strathtyrum Estate in St Andrews, over the years we have expanded and our customers can now explore The Farm Shop, The Steak Barn, The Butchery, The Flower Shed, The Home Store, The Eat Out, The Pizza Box and The Café.

We've had our head down and have been working hard at trying to create the type of place that we'd like to shop at and eat at and hope that customers come and share our passion for great local, traditional Scottish food."

The added extra

Consistent produce may be key, but the consumer of 2022 often wants an extra cherry on the cake from their favourite retailers, especially those they have to travel to. In the world of fine food and drink, this is often about experience. Delis, farm shops and independent retailers are ten-a-penny, but those that stand out often offer more to lure customers in, from workshops and events to restaurants and other added extras.

At Balgove, the award-winning butchery team hosts workshops and classes throughout the year to show customers how to prepare their meat. "Our seasonal markets are also hugely popular as we're introducing producers and buyers face to face as well as having street food and live music so there's a real buzz in the air!" Other examples include Daylesford, which hosts a variety of events as well as workshops focusing on organic growing, gardening, floristry and the floral arts, while The Farm in Snitterfield just outside Stratford-upon-Avon hosts everything from wellness workshops to makers' markets.

For Allen, a major part of offering customers a one-off experience is the service they get when they walk through the doors. "It's about getting people to try your product. People will walk into a fine food shop but they're unsure of what things are or how to approach it so I think it's about creating experts. Spend time educating your staff – if you've got someone on the cheese counter make sure you're educating them on

> "Turning customers into 'disciples' or brand ambassadors is another tool in helping spread the word"



CAPTION

> Our arms are open wide and our team is ready to welcome all through the doors and this starts with the local community and ensuring we have created a unique space for all

what they're selling. They don't even need to be an expert, they just need to be more expert than the shopper." If staff have that expertise, they can then help with the all-important job of educating the consumer – a process that often sees them coming back again and again for that extra-special service. "If you can educate your customers, they're more likely to buy off you," adds Allen. "So it's about shouting about what you do a little bit."

Providing service that stands out from the crowd is something Robert Hunningher, founder of London-based Humdingers Catering and Bakery, takes seriously as a way of ensuring they are on people's radar. Humdingers, which provides catering for the likes of Amazon and Alexander McQueen, now has two cafés – one in Hornsey, north London, and Molly's at the Museum of Home in Hoxton – all with a focus on community and helping others. "We're competing with the buying power, infrastructure and supply chains of companies that have hundreds of outlets," says Hunningher. "This means we need to be nimble and creative and deliver a different, more personal and ultimately better experience for our customers. If that means we need to be at the fruit and veg market at 4am to choose the best punnet – we'll be there. We feel we stand out already and provide a unique service that really can't be found in any other cafes." The next step, he adds, is to focus on staff wellbeing and staff empowerment – something that won't just benefit those who work for the business, but ultimately contributes to it being able to stand out with unique ideas and offerings. "An example is our chef Oscar and his idea to launch our Tapas Kitchen (set to launch mid-August). He had the idea to bring a taste of Spain to Hoxton and to serve across lunch and dinner. It's the first time we have explored actual dishes being available from the café and we are excited for future ideas to be shared from other team members."

Community

A focus on people doesn't stop with staff, but extends to the community – something that's not uncommon among destination retailers across the country, whether through working with other local businesses or doing something to help their community that makes them stand out and garners customer admiration. Humdingers' community focus shone during the COVID pandemic, when its soup kitchen – funded by the bakery – hosted a festive roast. The business has continued to look at what it can do to help others, including an app-based concept to feed paramedics when they're too busy to stop for food. "As a team, we are incredibly proud of how we have fully immersed ourselves into the community to create a safe and welcome space for all," adds Hunningher. " We know we have made a great start at creating a community hub for regulars and we often see the same faces swinging by for their morning coffee or afternoon pick-me-up. That's down to our staff and team knowing how important it is to build trust and loyalty with our customers. We focus on employing locals to ensure we are always giving back to the community." On top of that, a constant effort to listen to feedback from both locals and regulars means they can make sure they really are at the heart of the community, ensuring they're the go-to spot locally as well as for customers from further afield. "We are also priced well; to ensure inclusivity, we must ensure we are not pricing any individual out. Our arms are open wide and our team is ready to welcome all through the doors and this starts with the local community and ensuring we have created a unique space for all."

For Allen, being part of the community not only ensures a strong local customer base but helps bring people to Aubrey Allen as a destination retailer. "Relationships with other retailers in the town are always good for that. If you're not selling wine, make sure you have a partner that does and then cross market together. I think those sorts of things work really well."

Spread the word

The idea of marketing is an important piece of the puzzle for any destination retailer. People may know you locally, but without spreading the word on a wider scale it's unlikely that you will attract customers from further afield. From old-fashioned advertising to the powers of social media, there are plenty of tools at artisan retailers' disposal. But for many, regardless of the mechanism, getting the word out often relies on galvanising customers to help you. For Hunningher, all the elements they have worked hard to cement – consistent delivery of high quality produce, exemplary service and creating a team trained to put the customer's needs first – all help to ensure customer loyalty. "We know Molly's has a real blend of customers and there's no one size that fits all when it comes to building loyalty amongst customers. Our team strives to listen to feedback, take it onboard and ensure it's relayed back to the wider team to make changes and always create something better."

In Allen's view, turning customers into 'disciples' or brand ambassadors is another tool in helping spread the word – something they do with using events and one-offs. "For example, we might do a Christmas preview evening where we invite the top 40 or 50 customers along for free and really spoil and look after those top customers. And they then do the job for you [in spreading the word]. So really spoil your top customers with little exclusive events like a cheese tasting or things like that make them feel special."

> If staff have that expertise, they can then help with the all-important job of educating the consumer – a process that often sees them coming back again and again for that extra-special service


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FINAL CALL

We might be more familiar with the traditional 'spring cleaning', but the post-summer lull in trade provides the perfect opportunity to give your shop a much-needed evaluation. It may feel like the bright optimism of January was only yesterday, but we've already made it over halfway through the year. With so many challenges facing the industry in 2022, I'd say that's a huge achievement in itself!

As the long hot days draw to a close, take a step back from the hustle and bustle and assess what's worked so far this year and what hasn't. With a crisp chill in the air making an appearance, it's time to consider your long-term goals for your fine food business and start putting your plans into action.

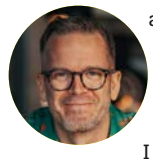
With the cool embrace of autumn comes lazy weekend walks to local independents, cosy comforting meals, warming hot chocolates and pumpkin-spiced everything. And of course, with autumn comes the festive season, and by the time this issue hits your doorstep, there will only be 16 weeks until the big day! It may sound like a long way away, but we all know how time seems to disappear through autumn and it will suddenly be upon us.

If you're already getting to grips with new initiatives and plans for the months ahead, well done! But if you're feeling a bit deflated and things haven't gone to plan, there is still time to get yourself back on track. We'll be providing tips and tricks for successful Christmas planning over the next few weeks alongside stocking ideas and advice from industry experts. But most importantly, take this time to speak to your customers, and ask them about their Christmas plans and what they're looking to buy this festive season. That way, you can be sure that your offering is tailored to your customers and catering to demand for successful selling.

With Christmas well and truly on the way, you're likely ready to embrace the festive spirit, too, placing orders and dreaming up new in-store displays, decorations and deals. With experts predicting that consumers will be saving up to spend a little more on luxuries at Christmas this year, getting ahead with your seasonal to-do list will ensure that you're putting your best foot forward for a successful festive season.

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

5 MINUTES WITH
SAM JEVEONS, CO-FOUNDER OF NUSA CAÑA INDONESIAN RUM



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY?
A lot of my identity is tied into the industry, but had I followed another path, it might have been in writing. At one point in life, I had the dream of being a political speechwriter. I'm glad I chose the path I did.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
My first part-time job was at a sports centre as a young fitness lackey.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
People and travel! I have been lucky enough to grow up in food and beverage's best years, an era full of amazing and talented people, who after decades of hard work are running successful business, bars, brands and institutes attaining a level in the industry that inspires others. Knowing these people and aspiring to their actions keeps me driven.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
I worked for a few summers as an agency labourer when I was around 16. Every day I would receive a call to a new temp post in some crazy jobs.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
Creativity has been the thread throughout the various aspects of my career. I couldn't do a job without a creative aspect or outlet.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
Admin. As a serial small business owner, the amount of admin required has always been a challenge.

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
Diversity of cuisine is my food industry love. Living in Hong Kong, the choice of cuisine is amazing, from local Cantonese to regional Chinese and the host of international restaurants the city is known for.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
Portuguese clams 'a bulhao pato', reminding me of the best times with my wife.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
Onwards and upwards.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
Insects in Thailand. Frog in Beijing (not the legs). Balut in Philippines. 100-year-old egg in Hong Kong and stinky tofu in Taiwan.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
Shantaram by Gregory David Roberts, it's my never-ending holiday book. I was given my first copy 20 years ago travelling in Thailand and must have read it three or four times by now.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
The sweeter side of savoury.

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RHYTHM 108 HAZELNUT PRALINE SOFT-BAKED FILLED COOKIE

This soft and chewy blonde cookie is filled with a creamy chocolate hazelnut spread and topped with a sprinkle of toasted hazelnuts and mini Swiss chocolate chips, making for an indulgent afternoon pick-me-up with a mug of tea for dunking. The rich and decadent filling is so creamy that you wouldn't know it's actually dairy-free, and in our opinion, that's what makes a truly great vegan cookie. It's absolutely delicious, and definitely one snack that doesn't last long in the cupboard!

rhythm108.com

DATE SULTAN ROYAL VARIETY BOX

There's a reason why dates have become so popular in the past few years; so much more than being an ingredient to add texture to a sticky toffee pudding, they're treats in their own right – and never more so than when presented by The Date Sultan. This business offers up dates like you've never seen them before, in



a chocolate box format that's just as indulgent as the classic. From pistachio-filled dates to speculoos-slathered or delicious natural date variants, these toffee-tasting bites are every bit as indulgent as they look.

datesultan.com

HIP POP KOMBUCHA APPLE AND ELDERFLOWER

The *Speciality Food* team are huge kombucha fans, so it takes a lot to impress us. This deliciously tart and sparkling organic kombucha combines crisp juicy apple with floral elderflower for a truly refreshing drink that has health benefits to boot. The brand is certified organic and avoids using heavily processed artificial sweeteners so you know what you're getting is the real deal. And with functional drinks on the rise, kombucha is definitely one trend you need to get on board with!



drinkhippop.com

THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Phillip Bishop, head chef at The Greyhound on the Test



We are an independently run boutique hotel on The River Test with a gastropub in Stockbridge, Hampshire. All around there are country pursuits including shooting and fishing on the world's most famous fly-fishing river! We have a seasonal menu including local produce from local suppliers and from our very own fishing boat. Guests have been warmly welcomed to the Greyhound on the Test for more than 600 years and the name of the pub and hotel dates back over 200 years when in the 1800s greyhounds were used to hunt hares. Visitors to our gastropub (which also has two AA Rosettes along with many other accolades!) really enjoy the pub's riverside garden.

Guests often fish in the Test and leave us the fish to use for our menu. We also cater a lot for weddings; last month the groom caught his own fish and had it for his wedding breakfast! Test Trout is an amazing fish, both Brown and Rainbow trout especially as we get it so fresh. We send some to our local butchers, Robinsons in Stockbridge, who cold smoke it and we use that on our breakfast menu. We also use it on our starters; at the moment we have an elderflower cured test trout dish using fresh local ingredients.

We use Claytons eggs for our breakfast spread and in all our pastries and desserts. They are great quality local free-range eggs. For our sausages, bacon, black pudding, Sunday roast pork belly and sausage meat for our sausage rolls we use Greenfields pork. They're a small, family-run business supplying award-winning, free-range produce made from their own herd.

Another great one is Fundamentally Fungus, Cultivated Stockbridge Wild Mushrooms. We use them on our breakfast menu and throughout our seasonal menus on different dishes.

The Chalk Stream area is great for watercress, our veg supplier Chefs Delight sources some great Hampshire watercress which we use in our velouté and in our sandwiches for Kingfisher Hampers; our amazing made-to-order hamper business. Chefs Delight also supplies us with all the seasonal fruits and vegetables from the new forest, amazing strawberries are coming in at the moment! Hoxton Bakehouse supplies our sourdough – they're an amazing husband and wife team, ex-chefs that make incredible sourdough and have now expanded to seven stores too.

We've worked with our local suppliers for years and forged great relations with them. They look after us, always ring and let us know when something new is coming into season or a great product they've got. We love having a local special to sell and they always go down well with guests.

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CREATING AN ITALIAN HAVEN FOR HOME COOKS

Offering a range of premium ingredients and ready-made options will appeal to novice and experienced home cooks alike this autumn

The cost-of-living crisis has prompted consumers to cut back on unnecessary expenditure and as a result, they are eating out less. But while they may not be visiting their local Italian restaurant as often, this doesn't mean they don't want premium pizza and pasta. They simply want to recreate it at home! Italian cuisine is perfectly suited to aspiring home cooks both novice and experienced alike, so stock up and cash in.

Many shoppers are looking to their local independent retailers for quality pastas that can create a special dish from home, and therefore, being able to offer a solid variety of different shapes and sizes to cater to those needs is important. Look further afield than the classic shapes such as penne and spaghetti, and experiment with orecchiette, butacini and boccole.

Alongside top-quality pasta, you will need to stock all the ingredients for creating premium sauces. Tomatoes are used as a base for a variety of pasta dishes, so offering great tomatoes, in all their fresh, jarred, canned and pureed forms will help your customers create comforting classics such as ragu and arrabbiata. Provide a range of fresh Italian herbs for garnishing, high-quality salt and chilli for seasoning, and premium oils for drizzling, roasting and sauteeing to encourage experimentation.

Stocking a range of ready-made sauces also allows shoppers with less time available for cooking from scratch to still be able to whip up a delicious pasta dish at home. Having a good selection of different tomato sauces as well as flavourful pestos and even white sauces for lasagne ensures that the essentials are covered.

With a growing number of flexitarians, gluten-intolerants and nut-allergy sufferers, it is important to ensure that dietary requirements are considered too. But this doesn't mean limited choices, however. Premium Italian brands offer vegan and gluten-free versions of their authentic pastas and sauces, while pestos using seeds instead of nuts are a great stock to avoid allergens. Increasing the number of quality options for different shopper needs will help you to become a one-stop shop when it comes to creating Italian dishes at home.

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



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