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WELCOME

Welcome to *Artisan Essentials 2023*, the must-read annual resource brought to you by the team behind *Speciality Food*.

We're proud to present this valuable publication, full of expert insight into subjects as diverse as promotion, sustainability, staffing and online retail, as a guide to help support you and your business weather the coming 12 months.

As well as helpful intel and advice, we share profiles of some of the brands and products worth stocking to offer your customers a raft of exciting new flavours and formats to enjoy in 2023.

Until next time,

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THE NEW ICE AGE

Matt Whelan, MD of Fieldfare, explains why fine frozen foods are the product on everyone's lips



The combination of innovation, focus on taste and quality, coupled with the convenience factor, makes fine frozen foods really appealing to the modern speciality shopper, but how do retailers make the most of the opportunity without overstretching themselves?

The demand for high quality frozen food is growing and more fine foods shoppers now expect to see frozen in their local speciality store. As with all frozen foods, convenience is key but fine foods shoppers may also prioritise sustainability, their household's needs, or they may be looking for something to treat themselves with. Taste and quality are of course top priorities too.

> "FINE FROZEN FOODS CAN COMPLEMENT ANY RETAIL ENVIRONMENT AND OFFER A GREAT OPPORTUNITY THAT IS NOT TO BE MISSED"

How do retailers take all these factors into consideration, alongside everything else such as current range, space and more within their outlets? This is where the expertise of established fine foods suppliers such as Fieldfare come in. Fieldfare places great emphasis on working closely with outlets to tailor a bespoke range and plan that is ideally suited to each store and its customers. The brand's unique 'scoop your own' concept is also very appealing to shoppers, whilst the wide range and quality, alongside the brand's longstanding commitment to sustainable practices, ticks many of the boxes for the modern shopper.



Conscious living

Sustainability is a consideration for many fine foods shoppers. They understand the role that frozen products can play in helping them to reduce food waste at home. In addition to the naturally long shelf life that frozen offers, Fieldfare's pick-your-own system is particularly attractive to singles, couples or those catering for households with fragmented meal needs. Shoppers can scoop as much as they need or just take a single portion of whatever they fancy, even different products for different members of the household as needed. Additionally, Fieldfare's no or minimal use of packaging enables shoppers to reduce packaging waste too.

Naturally preserved

For customers who are health-aware, quality foods prepared with premium ingredients, naturally preserved through freezing, is a very attractive proposition. It offers them the opportunity to choose convenient and pre-prepared foods that use no, or very minimal additives. The long shelf life also means that they can



stock-up, keeping core essentials such as Fieldfare's award-winning pastries or bespoke vegetable mixes to hand for when needed, without constantly having to monitor use by dates.

Discovery and treat

With the current cost of living concerns, many shoppers are cutting back on big ticket items such as holidays but they still want to treat themselves with less costly, everyday treats. Tasty food is an easy option to address this need as it is justifiable and very satisfying to discover something new and delicious that they can enjoy at home.

Furthermore, Fieldfare's concept offers the shopper an experience. The specially designed freezers are treasure troves of taste, with delicious products just waiting to be discovered. The simple concept promotes trial as it allows consumers to easily pick up how much they want from any given product, which is ideal for fine foods shoppers who tend to be open to trying new products. For example, Fieldfare's new single portion desserts and savoury nibbles, such as the new Mac 'n' Cheese Bites or delicious single portion Summer Puddings, are selling particularly well as shoppers are free to explore the range.

It is important that retailers ensure their range remains 'discoverable'. Fieldfare recommends stocking a good number of quality essentials, such as their best-selling pastries or meal-makers such as the Potato Gratins and Smoked Salmon and Cream Cheese Roulades but making regular stock updates or seasonal adjustments to keep shoppers coming back for more.

A simple solution

Fieldfare's experienced team knows what works best in a variety of fine foods outlets and will help proprietors to make stocking Fieldfare as simple and profitable as possible. The team will help to curate a range, plan, fit and install the freezers and eye-catching branding to make the most of the available space. They maintain an ongoing dialogue with stockists, offering regular range reviews and quick and easy online ordering. They also supply and regularly update the POS and various marketing tools such as social media assets to help stockists make the most out of stocking Fieldfare.

Furthermore, Fieldfare actively and successfully promotes its brand to consumers through social media channels, glossy magazine advertising, PR and influencer activity.

Cost saving opportunity

Frozen also holds cost saving benefits that retailers may appreciate in the current climate. The naturally longer shelf life of frozen means that, with proper stock management, there is no waste, unlike fresh or chilled where sell-by dates need to be monitored very closely. For those who thought that freezers are costly to run, think again. Fieldfare's chest freezers are more energy efficient than open chillers and 2.5 times more efficient than upright freezers. They typically use only 3.3 kwh of energy per day and offer outlets a solution that, can really help to keep costs low and maximise profits.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Fieldfare has been supplying the best quality loose or individually portioned frozen products to shoppers with its 'scoop your own' concept for over 40 years. Always putting quality, taste and choice central to the brand's offering, the founding principles of the brand have remained firmly in place over the years but what has, and continues to evolve, is the breadth of the range and availability. With its range comprising loose frozen fruit and vegetables to award winning pastries and convenient pop-in-the-oven meal makers, as well as tempting deserts, frozen fish and meat lines, Fieldfare is now stocked in hundreds of speciality and fine foods shops across the UK.

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William Reed.



Jamu Wild Water

Taking inspiration from nature's larder, Jamu Wild Water is on a mission to rewild hydration from the inside out. Their all-natural sparking waters are entirely free of sugar, artificial additives and preservatives, and contain natural fruit flavours, nourishing botanicals and prebiotic plant fibre to stay happy and hydrated the healthy way. Winners at the Nourish Awards 2022, their award-winning waters are suitable for all ages and harmoniously balance flavour and wellbeing benefits. Created in Devon and crafted by nature, Jamu Wild Water is a new generation drink that donates 10% of its profits to rewilding projects that encourage young people to explore, enjoy and restore nature.

07967998684 hello@jamuwildwater.co.uk jamuwildwater.co.uk



6 O'clock Gin

6 O'clock Gin is a craft gin brand with over 30 years' experience in the spirits industry. They patiently distil artisan gins in small batches, using traditional skills and only the best natural ingredients.
6 O'clock Gin's core line-up is led by their flagship, strikingly smooth London Dry which is now available in a handy refill pouch and helps to reduce associated carbon emissions by over 90%.
In 2020 the range was adapted into delicious bartender quality ready-to-drink cocktails, ready to enjoy wherever the spirit takes you.

01454 418 046
sales@6oclockgin.com 6oclockgin.com

Thursday Cottage

Thursday Cottage have recently released a NEW White Chocolate Spread into their range which is a 'must stock' product. It is produced using only the finest Belgian White Chocolate and is mixed gently in small batches to ensure that the final product is as silky smooth in texture as possible. This indulgent spread is irresistible when drizzled over pancakes or dolloped onto warm dark chocolate brownies. The NEW White Chocolate Spread joins Thursday Cottage's existing Spreads range containing Chocolate Caramel Spread, Salted Caramel Spread and Gingerbread Caramel Spread.

01621 814 529 jams@thursday-cottage.com
thursday-cottage.com





Rowcliffe

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

01892 838 999 sales@rowcliffe.co.uk rowcliffe.co.uk

Summerdown

Winners of the BBC Food and Farming Best Drinks Producers Award, Summerdown brings you a range of 100% plastic free restorative herbal teas, all made from the essential herbs grown on their Hampshire farm. The collection includes their original Peppermint tea which is 'twice as minty' because their Black Mitcham peppermint leaves are dried and then infused with the essential oil from their own distillery; a relaxing and soothing Peppermint & Camomile tea which is made from camomile flower heads infused with Summerdown's pure peppermint essential oil and for those in search of a truly comforting, shoulder-loosening brew, their mild & calming Camomile tea is made from the floral camomile heads grown on the farm.

01256 780 252
sales@summerdown.com summerdown.com





Burning Barn Rum

Inspired by a massive fire on the family farm, and motivated to forge something positive from it, the team behind Burning Barn launched their own craft rum business – Burning Barn Rum. Its flavours are inspired by the fire, that's why the range contains a fiery Spiced rum, a smoky Smoked rum, and the honey for the Honey rum comes from the hives near the barn. Burning Barn is proud to use only whole, natural ingredients to flavour their rums, you won't find any artificial flavours here. Burning Barn is on a mission to provide quality flavoured rums to discerning rum drinkers across the UK. In the range of 70cls, Gift Sets and RTD cans, there is something for everyone.

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TRENDING FLAVOURS **FOR 2023**

From the industry-altering food movements to exotic ingredients, these are the trends that retailers can cash in on this year

Understanding the top trends for 2023 can only benefit your business, so strap in and read on to find out exactly what's set to sell in the year ahead.

It's worth noting: these five shifts are no flash-in-the-pan trends – they are redefining the food and drink sector as we know it.

1 Functional properties

It's been proven that what we eat can affect our memory, concentration and focus, and according to Mintel's *2023 Food Trends Report*, "consumer interest in brain health benefits has been growing". Mintel believes that in 2023, more people "will look for food and drink that influence cognitive capacity, manage stress levels and optimise brain function". There is a wide range of functional food products that offer all the luxuries of fine food such as quality, indulgence and provenance, so indies are well-placed to cash in.

> "CELEBRATE YOUR CUSTOMERS – THEY NEED IT NOW MORE THAN EVER"

2 New spirits on the block

One big shift projected for 2023 is the decline of gin and the rise of rum and tequila. "We're seeing a decline in gin compared to 2019, while tequila sales have doubled in size (up 116%) from 2020 to 2021", explained John Vine, spirits buyer at Waitrose, in the supermarket's *Food and Drink Report 2023*. Moreover, according to data from the store, the UK is now officially the third-largest rum market in the world. As Brad Wicks, founder of Devon Rum



Co, explained, "Just like gin before it, rum's now enjoying a renaissance, and a real passion among consumers for artisan rums is driving this."

3 Cooking with meal kits

The trend for recipe and meal kits that peaked in lockdowns continue to thrive. Consumers enjoy the convenience of having the meal components, ingredients or partially prepared foods in one kit ready for them to prepare at home. World foods suit the meal kit concept as it means the shopper doesn't need to buy whole jars of spices as the kits contain enough for two or four portions – avoiding food waste. They create a wholesome, tasty dish often with exotic flavours, for example, miso, teriyaki, satay, ramens, Thai curries, tacos and paellas and more.

4 Conscious eating

2023 will see the rise of 'climatarians' – those who have changed their eating habits to help combat global warming, including eating local, seasonal foods with as little carbon footprint and environmental impact as possible. Conscious eating is definitely a growing trend so expect to see a rise in demand for locally-made produce, foods from local farms, producers and businesses offering food and drink with few food miles. This is an issue that will be at the forefront of food choices for years to come.



5 Zero-proof lifestyles
Alcohol has "lost its cool," according to a September 2022 article by *Vice*, which noted the growing number of non-alcoholic options at bars and restaurants, as well as the move from some consumers towards ditching alcohol completely. The past few years have seen a steady rise in people wanting low- or no-alcohol options, as beverage brands started producing more refined non-alcoholic alternatives. This trend stems from more people, particularly Gen Z, choosing a zero-proof lifestyle. *The Guardian* reports British 16-24-year-olds are the driving generation shunning alcohol, with 26% fully teetotal.

> "MORE PEOPLE WILL LOOK FOR FOOD AND DRINK THAT INFLUENCE COGNITIVE CAPACITY, MANAGE STRESS LEVELS AND OPTIMISE BRAIN FUNCTION"

THREE TRENDING INGREDIENTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Keep an eye on these three exciting new food heroes, they'll be appearing everywhere in 2023!

1. Seaweed
Recognized as a sustainable superfood, it's no surprise that seaweed is rapidly becoming a popular snack and ingredient. Sold in numerous forms — from a replacement for fish in vegan options to crisps —it's become a must-have flavour in many households. Researchers say that growing seaweed can absorb carbon in the atmosphere, so as countries try to work together to combat climate change, seaweed farming can help these efforts. According to Thomas Thulesen, founder of Wavy Wonders, "It's a growing market that feeds into mega trends of environmentally conscious eating, coupled with the ongoing health focus."

2. Sansho peppercorn
This ingredient is popular in Japanese cuisine, made from peppercorns from the Japanese pepper plant. It has a zesty flavour, reminiscent of yuzu or grapefruit, and is versatile so it can be used in a range of dishes for all levels of cooking. As Gen Z fuels a rise in multicultural dining, new formulations made from ingredients with history and cultural significance will continue to grace menus and kitchens.

3. Mushrooms
Mushrooms are set for a big year in 2023. In particular, there is huge potential as functional ingredients across the many species of edible mushrooms. Lion's mane mushrooms, for example, have been shown to have neuroprotective effects as well as having an abundance of the heart-friendly fibre beta-glucan; meanwhile, more common varieties like button and shiitake mushrooms can be utilised for their anti-inflammatory properties. Mushrooms are already making their way into plenty of functional food formulations, but expect to see them front and centre in 2023.



Walker's Nonsuch

Unique to family company Walker's Nonsuch, the Luxury Toffee Selection includes four exciting bars of traditional toffee with a real hammer. Made with whole milk, butter, and over 125 years cooking experience, the taste and chew is second to none. Varieties include Original Creamy, Liquorice, Roasted Hazelnut and Nutty Brazil. A little history and instructions on how to break and enjoy this delicious treat are shown on the back of the pack. This is perfect for impulse purchase gifting whilst offering quality at affordable prices.

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hello@unordinaryoats.com
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Baron Pouget's Oxford Sauce

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

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TIME TO REFRESH

The quieter months can be an opportunity to revamp your premises, but it's vital to do it smartly says Ellen Manning

Most artisan food and drink retailers start small. But with success comes growth, and while some may choose to keep things simple, for many the time comes when they need more space, improved facilities, or something more in keeping with an established business rather than one that's new to the scene. That often means either expansion or refurbishment, but either step comes with a large financial commitment, inevitable disruption, and the eternal fears associated with difficult economic times, unpredictable audiences and what 'could' happen if it doesn't quite work. With so many pitfalls and so much at stake, it can be difficult to know when to take the plunge and how to choose whether to refurbish or expand into bigger premises.

> "THINK WHY YOU NEED THE REFURB – IT NEEDS TO BE A COMMERCIAL DECISION. THERE IS NO POINT SPENDING MONEY ON SOMETHING THAT CUSTOMERS WILL NOT PAY ADDITIONAL FOR OR BUY MORE FROM"

"You know the time is right when your space doesn't fill your soul," says Catherine Connor, co-owner of Lovingly Artisan Bakery, which recently refurbished its flagship store at Plumgarth's near Kendal. "If it doesn't inspire you, you're less likely to be the inspiration in that space and your customers certainly won't be inspired either, which is what you really don't want." For Connor, refurbishing was about creating a "visual feast" – an environment that left a lasting impression and would encourage people to return as well as inspiring them to share pictures on social media. In Connor's view, building up a tribe of loyal customers who visit weekly, then asking them to follow you to a new location can be a risky move. "If you've built something magical and they are queuing down the street (in our case), that's definitely not a hint to move. Instead it's an affirmation that you need to keep doing all that you're doing but look at ways of doing it better to keep improving the customer experience. If an inspirational facelift is all your business requires, make that your goal – adding additional costs to your bottom line and overall expenditure is something you really have to think long and hard about."

A facelift can be cheaper than a move

For Maria Whitehead, co-owner at Hawkshead Relish, a fresh look and an uplifting shop is key to attracting customers and ensuring they enjoy their experience. "Letting things slide might be an economy but it deters shoppers," she says. Refurbishment can also prove cheaper than moving premises, says Whitehead, especially if you're savvy about it. "It's often possible to upcycle fittings and move things around quite significantly, which allows you to provide a variety of new retail configurations but also gives your overall look a refresh and in many cases can provide a store with elegance and renewed vibrancy at minimal cost. It's certainly far cheaper than looking for new premises and it also helps landlords who in many cases are keen to retain tenants who look after the property and pay their rent, so don't be afraid to renegotiate a lease – it can't harm to ask and that's straight on your bottom line."

Mandira Sarkar, founder of Surrey-based Mandira's kitchen, an



award-winning producer of authentic Indian food, realised that while she loved her shop, it didn't lend itself to the growing footfall they were experiencing after opening in 2019. "We couldn't display things properly, customers could not choose for themselves and it was all a bit transactional. We didn't really have the option of extending the space so had to redo the existing space cleverly and decided it was time to refurbish." Her advice in deciding whether the time is right? "Think why you need the refurb – it needs to be a commercial decision. There is no point spending money on something that customers will not pay additional for or buy more from."

A growing opportunity

For Harry Jackson at butter makers Winter Tarn Dairy in Cumbria, refurbishment wasn't an option, since space was the biggest problem. The combination of the impact of the Covid pandemic, a big contract producing individual butter portions and a TV documentary catapulting them into the limelight meant their decision to expand to a new dairy three times the size of their previous home was a necessity. He admits the move was scary, albeit vital. "Obviously, you've got to think that your rent's going out at a much bigger rate than it was and we've spent on new equipment, so it is quite scary." But while expansion was about increasing volume, it also helped improve their product. "By putting better equipment in, it's actually allowed us to produce a better butter." Alongside that, one day he hopes further expansion would allow them to move to a smallholding where sustainability can be front and centre of everything they do.

Lancaster Brewery Holdings has expanded noticeably in recent years, taking on several big projects during the Covid pandemic, including the creation of a distillery so they could produce their own Lancaster Spirits Company vodka and gin, as well as launching the Tite & Locke Bar at Lancaster train station. "We've developed and invested in more projects and new businesses in the last three years than any other three



> LETTING THINGS SLIDE MIGHT BE AN ECONOMY BUT IT DETERS SHOPPERS

year period in our company's history," general manager Gemma Carradice tells *Speciality Food*. The projects had been on the cards for a while, but the Covid pandemic gave them time to think and decide to push ahead. "Covid gave us the opportunity to think, 'hang on a minute we can make this happen'." Such a step may sound whimsical, but the changing nature of the way people shop, eat and drink meant the time was right, she explains. "We are in a time of great flux. In such times it's important to flex, improve and adapt. Standing still doesn't work in such a rapidly changing economy. The distillery, for instance, is all about repositioning our company to generate more revenue from retail and the off trade."

Don't underestimate the value of creativity

In the same way the 'why' of when to refurbish or expand can vary, so can the 'how'. But while each business is unique and may do things differently, those who have been on the journey can point out the pitfalls or lessons they learned along the way. When it comes to refurbishment, it's important to do things that will make a difference for the customer, says Hawkshead's Whitehead. "Maybe don't redecorate the back office and instead concentrate on refreshing and revitalising the bits the public can see and use day in, day out." For Connor, pepping things up doesn't always have to mean spending lots of money. "Our simple mantra is: 'Don't throw money at it, throw your imagination at it instead'. A little creativity always presents you with the opportunity to make things better. And in the tough times, a little creativity is probably even more vital, you have to create the desire to want to come to the store to make sales," she adds, citing upcycling as one way of refurbishing without spending big. "The trick is not to fall into the trap of turning it into a vanity project – if it does it'll cost you a fortune. Try to see your location through the eyes of the customer, what do they want from your store and how do they want to feel when they are there?"

Sarkar opted for a swift refurbishment to speed the process along and minimise disruption. "Rather than do small bits and deal with individual

contractors, we decided to embark on a seven-day refurbishment with a core project team," she said. "This included a fabulous local company who were used to doing 24-hour turnarounds as they work with stadiums where time is of the essence. We also enlisted the help of a friend who does shop/curated interiors. My previous management consulting background did help as the core team met and mapped out a seven-day plan right down to what needed to be done at the micro level. The project ran (almost) to schedule although the day before we opened, there were 11 of us working way past midnight to ensure it opened on time." During that time, they ran a 'temporary' shop in a gazebo to continue sales, and despite losing some revenue, projected that the new shop would help recoup the losses within just a month. Her advice to anyone considering a similar step focuses on planning, cost and communication, from including contingency in any costings to communicating with customers so they know what to expect. "Plan plan and plan," she says. "Get a core team on board – we had a mood board, we planned out every day slot where everyone knew what had to be achieved. Get the best you can to help you."

Making the right decisions

Online butchers Turner & George spent years waiting for the right location for expansion, but finally found the right place at Greensmiths at Lower Marsh, an independent supermarket selling meat, artisan bread and dairy produce, as well as a café. "Refurbs are like the proverbial piece of string so it very much depends what you're coming into," says co-founder James George. "But I'd say make sure to carry out a good site survey and be realistic about what you really need to change for starters. The most expensive works are moving electrics, major plumbing and moving walls, so try to make the space your own with the minimum of these kinds of works. It's also worth thinking whether you can re-use equipment or source secondhand. This can save a fortune, but obviously if buying used items, it's best to get it from a reputable source that will test and guarantee. Before you start work make sure to visit the site with a good contractor, someone you've used before or a recommendation is best, and make sure to get a fixed price or solid estimate." It's also worth checking that you don't need any local authority permissions and additional elements such as parking restrictions or difficulty removing waste, he advises.

> "CASH IS CRITICAL. PRODUCE FORECASTS THAT DON'T JUST PRESENT AN OPTIMISTIC VIEWPOINT"

For Carradice, cash really is key when it comes to any decision to expand or refurbish. "I think it's tricky to give too much advice as every project in the artisan sector is quite unique. However, always focus on the cash. Cash is critical. Produce forecasts that don't just present an optimistic viewpoint. Examine the worst case scenarios, what would that do to you, as the owner? What could it do to your company?" While the company has taken on several major projects in a relatively short time, against the backdrop of a difficult economic climate, the running costs of their new ventures are relatively low. "If you do decide you want to do something, and it is a good idea, then make it happen. But obviously don't put things at risk. We've been quite careful and considered in what we've taken on. The distillery and new bar at Lancaster railway station came at great cost, but their running costs are relatively low. We're not burdened with an inflexible and large workforce for either business. So my main advice is, always look for growth, but be wary of new ventures with high fixed costs. At least until this current storm passes."

COST-SAVING TIPS

- Carry out a thorough site survey
- Be realistic about what needs to change
- Avoid excessive electrical and plumbing works, as these are the most expensive
- Consider reusing equipment or sourcing second-hand options
- Obtain a realistic quote from recommended contractors
- Check for hidden costs such as local authority permissions



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A l'Olivier

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

07845014242 rhian.hooper@daregalgourmet.co.uk oilmerchant.co.uk



What A Pickle!

What A Pickle!'s Essential Pantry Box is exactly what it says it is – essential and perfect for the pantry! It contains six tasty chutneys from the What A Pickle! range, from the incredibly popular Red Onion Marmalade to the Gold Award-winning Fig & Mustard sauce. What A Pickle!'s chutneys are beautifully presented in a striking triangular box with tasting notes for each chutney on the back. Please email to hear more about What A Pickle!'s Essential Pantry Box and expanding range of condiments, including chutneys, egg-free mayos, sauces for meat, salad dressings and of course gift boxes!

01584 876 694 emma@what-a-pickle.com
what-a-pickle.com

Shropshire Spice Company

The Shropshire Spice Company is a family business based in the heart of the Shropshire Hills in the village of Clun. Run by owners Robert and Fiona, they specialise in developing innovative foods which are wholesome and the perfect store cupboard staples. The 'So Simple' Range was inspired by Shropshire Spice's customers' desire to produce home-cooked meals but not having the time to cook from scratch. Meals can be prepared in minutes and each recipe needs only a few additional ingredients. Each recipe is designed for all-round appeal, and none are too hot or spicy. The range includes Swahili African Curry, Indian Keema Curry, Goan Xacutti Curry, Jambalaya, Stroganoff, Chilli Con Carne, Italian Classic Bolognaise, Beef & Chicken Casserole.

01588 6401 00 sales@shropshire-spice.co.uk
shropshire-spice.co.uk





Flower & White

Lovingly handcrafted in their Shropshire bakery, these show-stopping, award-winning, new and improved Meringue Clouds from Flower & White will seriously WOW your customers! Bursting with all-natural flavours and colours, these chocolate drizzled gourmet meringues are made with only the very best ingredients. Free-range British egg white is slowly whisked up with hot sugar, hand dosed, then baked low and slow to perfection resulting in an explosion of sweet perfection. Choose from 5 incredible flavours – Raspberry Eton Mess, Lemon Drizzle, Caramel Swirl, Very Vanilla and Double Chocolate.

Pile them high and display with tongs and paper bags to really maximise sales!

01952 684 626 hello@flowerandwhite.co.uk flowerandwhite.co.uk



Welsh Lady Preserves

The team at Welsh Lady Preserves have been making award-winning preserves and condiments since 1966, having won Supreme Champion at the Great Taste Awards on two separate occasions for their All Butter Lemon Curd and Apple & Cinnamon Curd. Their sauces, mustards, chutneys, jellies and relishes are prepared and cooked by hand, using traditional copper bottom pans to retain the goodness of the finest fruit and vegetables that they use. With no artificial additives or preservatives, each jar is hand checked to ensure quality from their kitchen to your shelf.

01766 810 496 sales@welshladypreserves.com
welshladypreserves.com

Burren Balsamics

Burren Balsamics are a small-batch artisan producer of infused condiments and preserves. Their goal is simple: to unlock the full potential of great ingredients, and share what they learn. Using cutting edge production techniques, Burren Balsamics liberate exceptional produce from tradition so that it packs an even greater punch. They love nothing more than providing the best flavours for your cooking and drinks.
Burren Balsamic's proud range of balsamic infused products have earned the team 38 Great Taste Stars, and they are twice winners of all Ireland Overall Artisan Products, two-time winners of Great British Food Awards, and Export Champions for the Department of International Trade.

07802566029 susie@burrenbalsamics.com
burrenbalsamics.com/pages/contact





Belvoir Farm

Premium soft drinks, Crafted with Nature; that's what Belvoir Farm is all about. Refreshingly real and reassuringly delicious, there's artistry in our still cordials and lightly sparkling soft drinks.

Personalise your Mother's Day with our limited-edition, gift-wrapped inspired Elderflower and Rose in both Sparkling (750ml) and Cordial (500ml). Which is made to our traditional family recipe, crafted from masses of hand-picked elderflowers with rose petal extract for a delicately floral taste. Enjoy as a soft drink or mixer.

01476 870 286 info@belvoirfarm.co.uk belvoirfarm.co.uk



Sweet Freedom

What a delicious award-winning range of UK made syrups and spreads! Naturally sweetened only with fruit, this better-for-you suite of products has won 13 Great Taste Awards, is entirely plant-based, Vegan Society-certified, palm oil-free, plus the chocolate range only uses Fairtrade cocoa. Astonishingly the range is also lower in calories and fat then the rest, and high in or a source of fibre. Their plastic bottles are 30% recycled, everything is recyclable, and they quietly support a number of charities. A very tasty success story, with a superb range that belongs firmly on your shelf!

07930228334 admin@sweetfreedom.co.uk
sweetfreedom.co.uk

Supper Club

Supper Club offer award-winning frozen meals, made in the heart of Lancashire using the finest ingredients. These are chef-designed, restaurant-quality suppers and their foodie team have had great success with retail and online since launching in May 2022. The range includes award-winning Lasagne Al Forno, Cottage Pie and Macaroni Cheese with Pancetta, along with authentic Indian suppers Chicken Tikka Masala, Chicken Jalfrezi and British family favourites Lamb Hot Pot, Shepherd's Pie and Fish Pie.

01524 544 594 info@supperclubcompany.com
supperclubcompany.com



HOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE **SUSTAINABILITY OPPORTUNITY**

Ethical credentials are becoming an important consideration for every business – particularly in the fine food and drink sector

With a climate crisis threatening our planet, a vast number of consumers have been aspiring to more sustainable lifestyles, and Kantar predicts that 62% of the British population will be 'Eco Actives' by 2030. This means that brands and retailers that currently underperform with Eco Actives face a big loss as this shift in the population increases.

In fact, independent retailers are in a prime position to take advantage of the sustainability opportunity that this shift in consumer behaviour will bring.

Selling organic

Organic produce is only gaining popularity, and fine food retailers are well-placed to cash in on this sustainable seller.

Successfully selling organic produce comes down to the art of educating your customers in a non-patronising way that also resonates with people.

According to Maddie Grinham, brand manager at Mr Organic, "There is a marked shift away from big brands, with consumers gravitating to challenger brands that have much more of a focus on sustainability, ethics,



and innovation. By understanding these needs, retailers can ensure they are stocking a good range of organic products that perfectly match their target consumer."

Mitch Thorne, marketing executive at Eversfield Organic, recommends using the sense of community built by independent retail to your advantage. He explains, "It comes down to strengthening our ties in the local community. We've steadily built a loyal customer base by combining bespoke, personal service and quality organic produce. By striving for a supreme customer experience, word of mouth has worked in our favour and helped our sales figures. Along with friendly reminders of the health, taste, and environmental benefits of organic, we believe this is why our independent outlets are thriving."

Catering to plant-based demand

A recent report from Mintel found that UK sales of meat-free products will be expected to be in excess of £1.1bn by 2024. With a growing number of consumers now looking to incorporate more plant-based alternatives into their diet, now is the time to cash in on this sustainable trend.

According to Ana Purcaroiu, senior consumer analyst at GlobalData, "People will increasingly base their choice of retailer on the availability of plant-based products, as GlobalData's survey revealed that 21% of UK millennials claim that the availability of special dietary products is the most influential factor when deciding where to do their grocery shopping."

> "AS DISPOSABLE INCOME IS BEING SQUEEZED, CONSUMERS ARE STILL LOOKING TO MAKE ETHICAL, SUSTAINABLE CHOICES THROUGH THEIR GROCERY SHOPPING. CONSUMERS WILL BE MORE DEMANDING TO ENSURE BUSINESSES ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN TO ENSURE ZERO WASTE IS STILL ON THE AGENDA. THE COMPANIES WHICH ARE PUTTING THIS HIGH ON THEIR PRIORITIES LIST WILL BE SUCCESSFUL"

62% OF THE BRITISH POPULATION WILL BE 'ECO ACTIVES' BY 2030

While it might seem like a daunting task to add plant-based options to your counters or shelves, Emma Bowe, food director at Veganly Deli, explains that it can actually be a stress-free process. "A deli can start by scanning their current supplier catalogue and stocking some vegan cheese and meat products. If your distributor does not stock any, it's time to find another that does – the vegan sector has been exploding since Covid-19. To be ahead of the game, you need to expand your offering."

Championing regenerative agriculture

Regenerative agriculture is certainly having a moment. As the food and drink sector battles with sustainably feeding a growing population, fine food retail should take advantage of this shift towards nature-friendly farming.

Whether you run a farm shop stocking the produce from your own fields or just have a single biodynamic wine on your shelves, this emerging category has huge relevance to every fine food business.

In fact, independent fine food retailers are in a unique position to champion sustainable meat products from regenerative and pasture farms, highlighting the need for better-quality meat.

According to Richard Wheeldon, the National Trust's senior national consultant on farming systems, "Telling a story as part of nature-friendly farming is really important; some of our tenants have great social media to showcase the good work they are doing day-to-day. The direct contact with the



consumer creates a great connection to nature and highlights the benefits of the farm on the local environment."

Investing in refill

Despite the current cost-of-living crisis, there is a high agenda for sustainable living, and independent retailers are well-placed to invest in a zero-waste future.

Sally Sneddon, commercial buying manager for Keelham Farm Shop, explains, "As disposable income is being squeezed, consumers are still looking to make ethical, sustainable choices through their grocery shopping. Consumers will be more demanding to ensure businesses are doing all they can to ensure zero waste is still on the agenda. The companies which are putting this high on their priorities list will be successful."

In fact, according to Catherine Conway, founder of Unpackaged, "The direction of travel is that single-use plastic packaging will become increasingly more expensive to put on the market, which will help shift supply chain, retailer and consumer behaviour towards reuse and refill. Businesses that invest now will reap the benefits, but it is a long road ahead."

> "THERE IS A MARKED SHIFT AWAY FROM BIG BRANDS, WITH CONSUMERS GRAVITATING TO CHALLENGER BRANDS THAT HAVE MUCH MORE OF A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY, ETHICS, AND INNOVATION"

Independents should take advantage of this shift, and focus on making zero-waste options more convenient and easier to access. Although indies will never achieve hyper convenience, consumers are increasingly dedicated to living sustainably and in line with the indie ethos.

49% OF **CONSUMERS** CONSIDER **SUSTAINABILITY** WHEN MAKING **PURCHASES**

HOW TO **GROW YOUR CUSTOMER BASE**

Fine food retailers are known for their excellent customer service – alongside shelves packed with brilliant products, of course. This means they're in a strong position to build a devoted customer base.

In fact, they've proved their adaptability and determination over the pandemic and the new normal, and with demand for local food and drink and service-based experiences rising, it seems exciting times are ahead for the industry.

Discover four tips that indie retailers can use to improve their services and boost customer loyalty.

Word of mouth

It's the age-old method. A happy customer will share their experience with others, and people don't trust businesses, they trust people. Therefore, it is crucially important that shoppers have such a positive experience in your store that they want to recommend it to their peers.

As Laura Roberts, owner of Laura's Larder, explains, "I'm still learning here and will be all the time. But all I can say without hesitation is the best way to grow a business like ours is through recommendation. Someone bringing their parent, their cousin, or their friend to the store. Sharing some food at their home and saying where it's from, with a smile.

> "ALL RETAILERS HAVE TO THINK ABOUT OFFERING 'THINGS TO DO' AS WELL AS SELLING THINGS TO BUY, AND FINE FOOD BUSINESSES ARE WELL PLACED TO SUCCEED IN THIS RESPECT"

"But to be part of that recommendation you need to be the best you can be every day to make sure you're spoken about well, and not badly. There's no magic answer to this. It's the positive result of hard work and focusing on the detail."

Focus on local

Local, artisan food products have seen an exciting boost during the Covid-19 pandemic and the arrival of Brexit as consumer demand for food and drink with provenance rose. After all, indies should remember that local produce carries a certain appeal.

One area where this is particularly true is cheese. As Jen Grimstone-Jones, co-owner of Cheese Etc, The Pangbourne Cheese Shop, explained, "People want to support local first and then British, which is just so fantastic. We saw this trend before Brexit and it has just continued at pace since."

This focus on localism is also felt by Oli Smith, owner of The Bristol Cheesemonger, who told *Speciality Food*, "Two of the most frequently asked questions in our shop are: 'What are your most local cheeses?' and 'What do you have that I can't buy anywhere else?'.

"Our biggest selling cheeses are therefore the ones where we have the closest relationship with the producers; our own hand-selected Westcombe Cheddar, our Sparkenhoe Blue, (for example) as well as those really small production cheeses that are made within 45 minutes or so of the shop: Baronet, The Wandering Ewe and so on."

Stocking hyper-local products gives indies the advantage over the multiples. As Owen Davies, owner of Ty Caws, explained, "British cheese can bring so much interest into any independent retailer and there are many British cheeses unavailable within the large retail market."



It is this appeal that results in repeat custom. As Simon Jones, co-owner of Forest Deli, explained, "We sell local milk, local eggs, locally roasted coffee etc. that people come in a couple of times a week to buy. That keeps them coming in regularly and they will often buy some extras or start to come in at the weekend to get some cheeses."

Communication is key

Part of the difficulty of growing your customer base is turning shoppers into regulars. Of course, quality products with well-curated stories will sell well, but they require a friendly shop assistant to communicate the appeal.

According to Laura, the key is "Offering a personalised service in-store, remembering who people are and what they like, being nice, going the extra mile – all just so obvious, but totally necessary. I have the bonus of loving what I do, which helps. And if you get something wrong, 'fess up, don't blame someone else, because people appreciate honesty."

> "YOU NEED TO BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE EVERY DAY TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE SPOKEN ABOUT WELL, AND NOT BADLY"

Simon agreed, "Learning customer names, remembering their children's or dogs' names so you can have a little extra chat over and above the transactional part of the visit always goes down well. We will also almost always order specific cheese in if someone asks for it which also means we find new cheeses as well.

It is interactions like these that differentiate independent retail from the multiples, and therefore engaging in active communication with your customers will keep them coming back. After all, everyone likes to feel special, so taking the time to chat with your shoppers, whether it's over the counter, amongst the freshly picked vegetables, or at the till, will make all the difference.



When you need to be seen

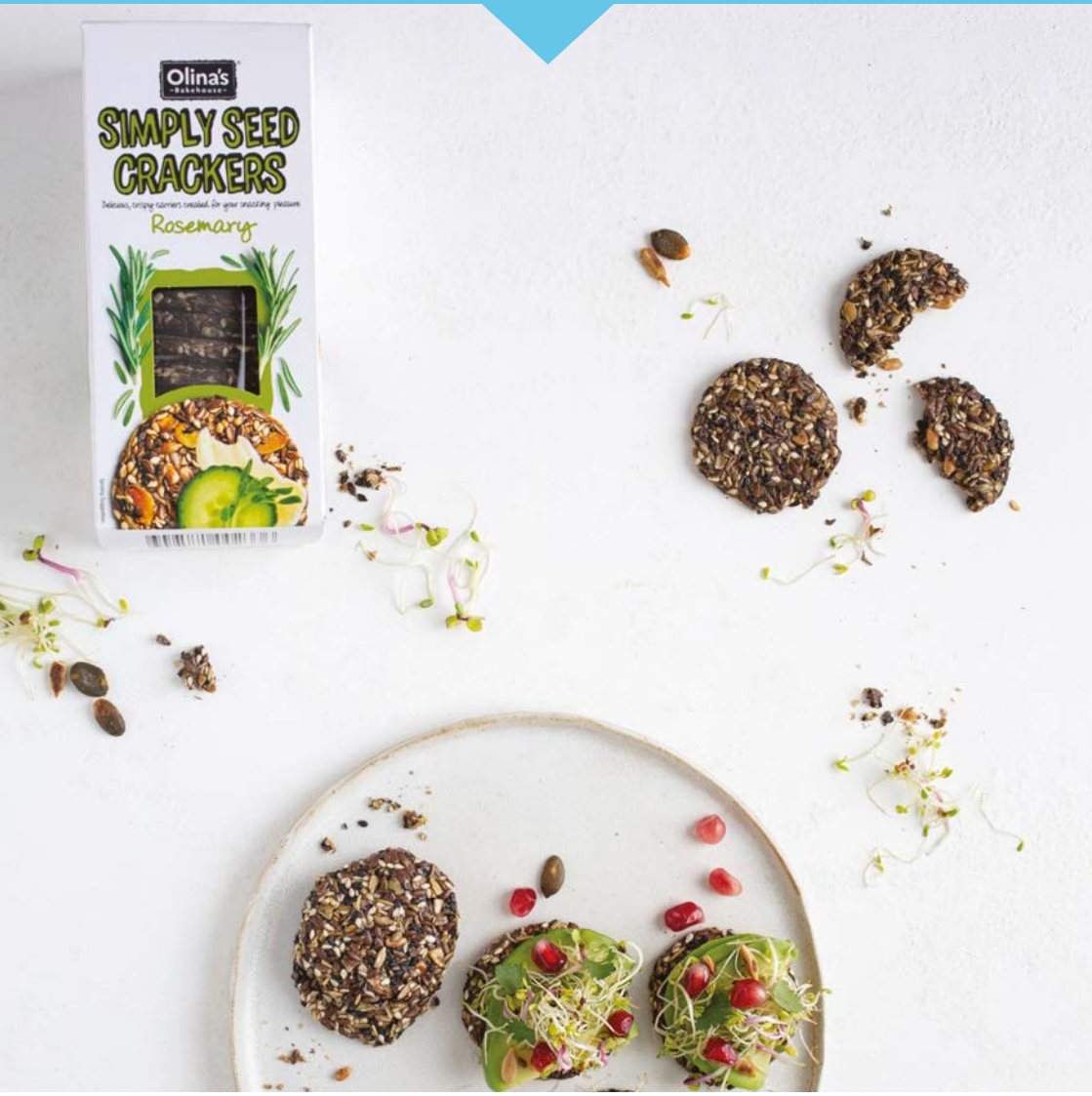
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Olina's Bakehouse

Olina's Bakehouse core range of Seeded Toasts and crispy Wafer Crackers have become a well-established brand in the independent speciality sector, while the 'Free From' products are continuing to win over a wide range of new consumers. The Simply Seed range of Flatbreads and Crackers are low carb and therefore keto-friendly, as well being gluten-free and vegan. The Gluten Free Seeded Toasts are packed with fruits and deliver an uncompromising crunch and flavour. Keep an eye out for the two fantastic Seeded Snackers products, available as Roasted Beetroot and Balsamic Vinegar & Caramelised Onion flavours to launch very soon!

07771981420 mash@gourmetpartners.co.uk gourmetfood.au/uk





The Cornish Cheese Company

The Cornish Cheese Company make a range of handmade farmhouse cheeses on their family farm based on the edge of Bodmin Moor in Cornwall. It all started when the milk price crashed in the late 90s and Philip had to add value to his milk, so he decided to diversify into cheesemaking with no prior experience. Since then, they have won multiple awards with their soft creamy Cornish Blue and have more recently developed the range including a blue goats cheese named Cornish Nanny and their own farmhouse Cornish Brie, with more soft white cheeses on the way!

01579 362 294 enquiries@cornishcheese.co.uk
cornishcheese.co.uk

Stag Bakeries

Featuring a choice assortment of their favourite savoury biscuits, the Stag Bakeries Cheeseboard Selection Box is ideal for gifting, sharing, or livening up any cheeseboard. This selection box offers a variety of flavours and textures, and the mini cocktail size of the biscuits makes them ideal carriers for a wide variety of cheeses, along with other toppings such as meats, fish and pâté. Contained inside the Cheeseboard Selection box are four varieties of water biscuits (Original, Parmesan and Garlic, Chilli, and Rosemary), along with traditional Scottish oatcakes and wholemeal biscuits, ensuring that there is something for every menu and occasion.

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



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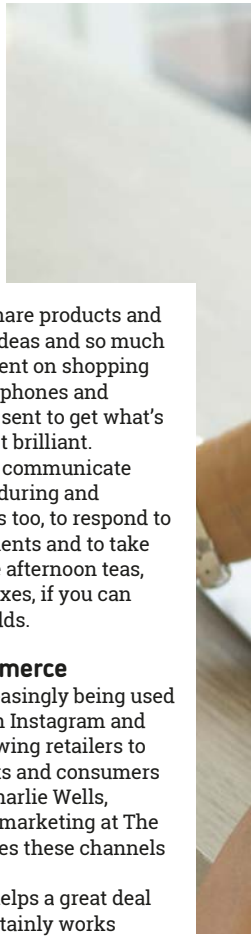
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Bubble Tea in the making...

REAP THE REWARDS OF FINE FOOD ONLINE

There's never been a better time to up your digital skills. Here's how and why to take your fine food business online in 2023



Shoppers are spending more time online than ever before, and on all sorts of platforms – from e-commerce sites to social media and beyond – so it makes sense to boost your assets while the iron's hot.

A strong online presence could amplify your business in more ways than one. Not only will it raise the profile of your business beyond your immediate area – potentially attracting new locals as well as consumers from further afield to check out your wares – it could cement your existing customer base and generate some much-needed extra sales.

> "ENGAGING [ON SOCIAL MEDIA] GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS AT SCALE IN A WAY YOU COULD NEVER DO IN-STORE"

Diving into socials

Social media is certainly worth an investment of time (and potentially funds) in 2023. Its various platforms offer a wealth of community-building opportunities for any food business.

One staunch advocate of social media for indie retail is Laura Roberts, owner of Laura's Larder. "Social media has been so important for the growth of Laura's Larder", she tells *Speciality Food*.

"We share the lunch specials on it daily, I'm told it's an appointment to view by many whether they are thinking of coming for lunch or just want some inspiration for something to make at home. We share products and their stories, recipe ideas and so much more. Some people sent on shopping tasks show me their phones and declare they've been sent to get what's in the picture. It's just brilliant.

"It's a great way to communicate directly with people during and outside of shop hours too, to respond to questions and comments and to take orders for things like afternoon teas, Christmas cheese boxes, if you can manage it all", she adds.

Embracing e-commerce

Social media is increasingly being used for e-commerce, with Instagram and Facebook pages allowing retailers to display their products and consumers to buy via the app. Charlie Wells, director and head of marketing at The Farm in Stratford, uses these channels to promote her store.

"I wouldn't say it helps a great deal [with sales] but it certainly works as another point of advertising our products or seasonal specials, which hopefully creates a sale. It also allows advertising on Facebook shopping pages as well, which if you have a large Facebook following plus Instagram it gives you double the chance to sell through your social media channels. The Farm has a very different audience on Instagram than Facebook, so we cover all potential customers."

What to post

Thinking about what to post on social media can be daunting, but social media should be fun at heart, and allow retailers to be creative. Laura advises, "Approach social as an extension of



the store. Use it to replicate all the detail that makes your customers loyal – sharing products, their stories, and examples of them being used such as demos and recipes.

"It's a great way to broadcast menus, specials, events and more. Also, if you can manage the communication channels it's a great way to engage with people. Engaging also gives you the opportunity to get to know your customers at scale in a way you could never do in-store. You can ask questions, run polls and even share special offers.

"But don't be too sales-y, use the same tone of voice as you would if face to face, you'll quickly lose those followers if you post nothing but promotional content. I always ask myself before I post something, what one thing do I want people to think or do from this post? And if there's no answer or not a positive answer I need to rethink, rework, or redo it."

The bottom line is that whatever you choose to post, it needs to look good. As Charlie concludes, "Make sure it's an attractive photo that's going on! I know that seems obvious, but I've seen some terrible photos recently. A bad photo can be just as influential as a good photo! It represents your brand so make it a good one and make that product pop!"

Gruyère AOP

Made in western Switzerland, Gruyère AOP has been produced in the same way since 1115AD, using raw milk from cows fed on grass in summer and hay in winter. It is the only cheese that has won the title of Best Cheese in the World at the World Cheese Awards four times and is available in different maturities: the Classic is matured for six months and has a delicate, nutty, creamy flavour. The Reserve is matured for 10 months and has a drier, more grainy mouthfeel. Gruyère AOP aged for 14 months or more has a much stronger flavour.

gruyere.com





Cocoa Canopy

Cocoa Canopy's drinking chocolate range has been carefully created using only a handful of ingredients – they're the only UK drinking chocolate brand to craft unique fine chocolate beads, for a superior, more intense flavour in every cup. Crafted for enjoying hot or iced as an alternative to coffee, there are five varieties in the range: Rich Dark, Smooth Milk, Salted Caramel, 'Milk & Dark' and single origin 70% Ecuador Dark – Rich Dark and Ecuador Dark are also vegan-friendly. All five varieties in the Cocoa Canopy range are made with sustainably sourced cocoa, each variety is palm oil-free and all packaging is 100% compostable, including the inner bag.

07426796676 navnotay@cocoacanopy.co.uk cocoacanopy.co.uk

HOW TO **USE YOUR USP**

Position your unique selling proposition right and you'll not only super-charge sales, but also strengthen customer loyalty, discovers Courtney Goldsmith

What is it that makes your shop sparkle against the competition? Whether it's at the heart of a meticulously planned marketing strategy or buried in your original business plan, your unique selling proposition (USP) is key to your business' success.

"Having a USP helps independent food retailers stand out and differentiate themselves from all of the other options that customers have for purchasing their food," says Catherine Erdly of the Resilient Retail Club. "So whether it's due to a speciality in a certain type of food, catering for certain dietary requirements, or just simply the wealth of knowledge and advice that customers can get from the staff, then having a USP is really crucial."

Whatever stage you find yourself at on your business journey, from seasoned pro to retail newbie, you've likely given your USP some thought. But are you using it to its full advantage?

Identify your USP

Thinking deeply about your USP can help you unlock sales, find new partnerships to pursue or even refresh your brand identity. And at a time when consumers are tightening their purse strings, considering the many ways in which your business meets their needs is important. So how do you do it?



To clearly define your USP, ask yourself what makes your business stand out against your top competitors:

- Do you stock local producers?
- Do you cater for a certain type of diet, be it vegan, gluten-free, etc?
- Do you import premium, undiscovered gems from Europe?
- Are you always the first to take a leap on emerging brands?
- Are you plastic-free?
- Do you offer specialised services like a deli or cheese counter?

Make a list and take a look at the competition to see how you differ.

Next, think about what motivates your customers to keep coming into your store. Do they rely on your staff's knowledge of products? Or perhaps you've noticed they are becoming more interested in sustainable options. By considering your customers' values, you'll uncover a rich tapestry of behaviours that spell out the real reasons why they buy your products instead of a competitor's. If you're unsure, you can even try asking them directly what stands out to them about your business. Once you have your list of USPs and your customers' motivations, match them up and rank them by most important to your business to least.

Take the next step

Your USP is more than a catchy slogan or a couple of words on your website. It's the ethos behind why you do what you do – and once you understand this, you can incorporate it into the experience of shopping in your store, as well as allowing it to feed into how you communicate with customers.

TOP TIP

Even if you think you know your USP backwards and forwards, thinking over these questions afresh and getting your thoughts down on paper can be a useful exercise to focus your mind.

> "HAVING A USP THAT CONSUMERS CAN BELIEVE IS ESSENTIAL. HYPE IS OUT, HONESTY IS IN"

"One of the best things to do is to utilise the multiplier questions," says Catherine. These are: How? Why? Where? When? Who? What?

"Think about explaining how you cater for a certain dietary requirement, for example, or how or why you've chosen this to be your speciality, who your store is for, what the benefits are of shopping with you," Catherine says. "Build the narrative around that so you can be confident that your customer really understands what you have to offer and why it's right for them."

Building your shop's narrative will help solidify your USP in your customer's mind. For example, if you start highlighting the many ways your store is making environmentally friendly changes through your in-store signage and website, you can become the go-to sustainable shop. Or perhaps you want to be seen as the champion of local producers in your area. You might need to rethink your shop layout, introduce tastings with local producers or zero in on the people and products you promote on social media. To become the venue at the top of consumers' minds when they think of fresh and convenient local produce, consider how your website could work harder to showcase the provenance of your products, or even whether you could trial veg box deliveries. The options are limitless, and they will be unique to every retailer's own USPs.

Once you have fully established and embedded your USP in your business, you can use your positioning to build rapport with customers in your target market – and in the era of the conscious consumer, it's all about transparency and trust. As Heather Morris of SH Foodie says, "Having a USP that consumers can believe is essential. Hype is out, honesty is in."

GO SOUL-SEARCHING

To build a USP for your brand that resonates with consumers, you'll need to look inward first. "Every business owner has a zone of genius, which is where their knowledge and their interests are aligned, and that is what I would suggest when it comes to looking for a USP," Catherine says. "You want an area that is both useful and interesting to your customers, as well as something that you may be very knowledgeable about."

While it sounds obvious, you may need to dig deeper than you think to uncover your own zone of genius. "The tricky thing here is that often our USPs feel very easy to us, so we don't even realise how valuable they are, but ask yourself what is it that you are really passionate about and really knowledgeable in, and use that to start honing in on your USP."

THE POWER OF MESSAGING

In a world where first impressions count, it's well worth investing in the way you present your business discovers Samantha Priestley

Signage and promotions might seem like a pretty straightforward area of a business, but you could be sending out messages, even by something as small as the colour or the font on your signs, that you weren't aware of. And this can be happening even before a potential customer steps inside your door. Simon Warne from The East Street Deli explains, "Kerb-appeal is so important to make a small shop like ours stand out from the crowd. The same goes for any advertising we do, whether it's in print or on social media, you're competing in such a tough marketplace that the first impression should never be overlooked."

> "THE TONE AND VOICE YOU USE TO CONVEY EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR BUSINESS MUST BE CONSISTENT, REFLECTING THE BRAND, TONE AND THE VISUAL ELEMENTS OF THE BUSINESS"

The words you use, and how you present them are vital to how others perceive you. Lidia Rumley, founder of The Brand Storyteller, believes staying 'on brand' and relaying a core message helps connect a business with customers. "Brand messaging goes beyond the descriptive facts surrounding any product," Lidia says. "It identifies all the things that matter to a customer and enables a brand to create a broader conversation with the people it wants to attract, by being not just informative, but also thought-provoking and aspirational."

Why words matter

Our words are the most powerful tool we have. Simon Warne knows that choosing words that speak to the desire for something specific in customers, can draw those people in. "We tend to use language that sets us apart from the more mainstream, national high street shops," says Simon. "Words like 'local' and 'artisan' always seem to resonate with our customers. Messaging also works well when we actually describe how far a product or supplier is based from our front door. If it is truly local and people know its actual location it's worth making it clear to potential customers."

Catherine Connor, co-owner of Lovingly Artisan, agrees that clear messaging is the key to catching the eye of customers and getting across what you want to say quickly. "The best form of language is simple, clear and concise. Make it easy to read and simple to understand. Customers are busy and they don't have the headspace to work out complex messages. Consumers read in bullet points, short character formats – think tweet and you won't go far wrong."

But businesses don't only have to think about length and using words and messages that say something about their brand, they also need to consider the way they are saying these things. "It's not just the messages that are important," says Lidia. "The tone with which these messages are delivered matters too. Those who want to stand out should look at developing insightful brand strategies that capture their purpose, passion, and personality, as well as everything that makes them different from their competitors, and deliver that through a series of messages that speak their customers' language and move them to buy."

Colour coordination

A study by The University of British Columbia found that colour has a big impact on our mood when looking at advertising and promotions. The study found that people are more receptive



to aspirational messages when the background of the message is blue. Blue promotes a feeling of safety and makes us think of the sky and the sea, so creates a sense of calm, making us more open to positive messages.

For Catherine, colour played a big part in designing signage for her business, but she feels it can also be used as a way of reinforcing a message that already exists. "It's about the colours matching your space, environment and craft. We've selected earthy tones, inspired by the landscapes that surround us in Cumbria, but it's also important to remember that you need to stand out. Give a lot of thought to what you want your signage to achieve and what you want it to say about your business in every sense. Ultimately think to yourself 'what's the purpose?', and that will influence your brand positioning too."

Keep it consistent

Businesses can always rebrand, but it's a good idea to start with one vision and to choose signage and messaging that's the right fit for your business, and to stick to it. Simon Warne sees this as being the thread that runs through the business. It needs to be consistent. "We think it's important to maintain the same look, feel and branding on everything we produce. If it's an external advert, a social media post or an internal promotional notice we use the same font, graphics and, where necessary, brand name and logo. We want our customers to instantly recognise when something is from The East Street Deli."

For Catherine this means making sure everything that appears digitally has the same message as that which customers see in-store. "Our online approach is consistent in terms of our branding and our messaging. We utilise various formats to engage with our customers and potential customers, including newsletters, social media posts and videos. The tone and voice you use to convey every aspect of your business must be consistent, reflecting the brand, tone and the visual elements of the business. Every aspect of our business has been carefully thought about to ensure consistency across the board."

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BUILDING A LOYAL WORKFORCE

Here's how to level-up your employees' satisfaction to set the scene for smooth trading in 2023

Let's be honest: independent retail can be gruelling. But all is well when your team is on its a-game and putting out fires all around your operation, right? When it comes to retaining and motivating staff the game has well and truly changed, so how can you hang onto the people – arguably your business's biggest asset – who will help your business thrive this year?

> "IF YOU CAN FIND A WAY TO WORK WITH YOUR STAFF IT WILL HELP KEEP THEM ON"

All about the money?

"In all cases of economic hardship it's young workers on lower salaries who feel the financial burden more," adds Toby Fowlston, chief executive of recruitment consultancy Robert Walters. "Their lack of experience – exacerbated further by the pandemic – puts them in a much weaker position than their older, more experienced counterparts when trying to bargain for higher pay."

The good news, if your costs are already far north of your comfort zone, is that you can do a good deal to mitigate an underwhelming wage offer. "Employers will be unable to increase pay at the same rate of inflation," points out Toby. "That's a fact, so this is where softer perks and benefits really do have a chance to make a difference." Pam agrees. "Offering things like flexible and reliable working hours, extra benefits like discounts and rewards, and good amounts of annual leave to help support a positive work/life balance, all help with employee retention."

Can you be more flexible?

"One of the keys to retaining and motivating your staff is to offer as much flexibility as possible," says Pam Hinds, head of HR at RotaCloud. "This could be flexibility over their hours, like making accommodations for childcare or making sure shifts are fixed and hours are regular; over the locations they work (if possible); or flexibility in their positions such as offering training so that they can move up or sideways into a different role should they want it." Could you rethink the rota to allow your full-time employees a couple of precious half days to go to the school nativity, or get on top of Christmas shopping? Is there wiggle room to allow Saturday juniors to dabble in social media posts that expose your aisles to new attention while fleshing out their CVs?

"By offering flexibility you give staff more autonomy over their working lives and their time outside of work," says Pam. "Flexibility is consistently one of the most requested workplace benefits, and one of the top cited reasons for taking a new job." It could also be the antidote to 'grind culture', the idea that employees must work ever harder, smarter and faster to reach their life goals. With traditional milestones (home ownership, starting a family, early retirement) out of reach for most millennials, a better work/life balance is more attractive than ever.

Fighting 'quiet quitting'

So what about your younger team members, whom statistics suggest are

likely to have moved back in to the family home and be more determined than their predecessors to put their own wellbeing above your expectations of them? The phrase 'quiet quitting' – coined in a viral clip by TikToker Zkchillin – resonates with many millennials whose disenchantment with work manifest an inner determination to 'act their wage' and stop going above and beyond. "This behaviour isn't something entirely new," says Toby. "There have always been less motivated individuals in the workplace. However, the real concern here is that unlike those few workers who tend to consciously be less productive at work, 'quiet quitting' is often a subconscious act borne out of frustrations toward the workplace. It's easy for managers to pull their employees up on lack of productivity, but unless they get to the bottom of the 'why' their motivation has dropped, then quiet quitting could well become a silent movement that has a damaging effect on your business's productivity and profitability."

Retaining experience

It's not just millennials who will benefit from a personalised approach. Analysis from The Health Foundation finds ill health unrelated to Covid-19 is pushing people over 50 out of the workforce. Which brings us to 'the great resignation', the phenomenon whereby older workers –you know, the ones who can convert from pounds and ounces and have the best horror stories about Christmas sampling events past – quietly exit the workplace a few years before anyone had expected. Whilst many older workers were staying in employment longer before the pandemic, a long-term trend for underlying ill health has been exposed in the last year, causing The Health Foundation to focus on the barriers to work for staff suffering ill health. "If the government's growth plan is to achieve its overall aims, it must treat health and wealth as inseparable," says Alice Major, one of its analysts. "Focusing on supporting people with ill-health back into employment can boost labour supply and make a substantive contribution to growth."

Pam believes strong listening skills will help get your approach to motivation right for your whole team, whether they need extra support with an evolving health problem or a role that better fits their future aspirations. "There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to motivating staff, and choosing perks or benefits based on age categories or assumptions is not only going to do you a disservice, it's potentially discriminatory," she says. "You should speak to your staff one-on-one, find out what their individual needs and motivations are, and design a benefits package or incentive programme based on those conversations. The investment in time that you make here will far outweigh the costs of implementing something that no one wants or uses." You might even be surprised by the incentives that matter most to your staff. "Increasingly we're seeing utility vouchers, travel cards, and streaming subscriptions all being offered to prospective employees," says Toby. No one's suggesting you hook storeroom temps up with Disney+, but could a staff discount card or training in transferrable skills sweeten the deal? Maybe.



ICON FOR THE AGES

With its unique flavour notes, ancient heritage and distinct focus on quality, it's no wonder Le Gruyére AOP is a cheese counter classic



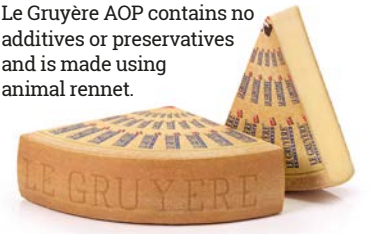
A MARK OF QUALITY

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.

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.



> "THROUGHOUT THE 900 YEARS SINCE ITS ORIGINAL CREATION, MAKERS OF THE CLASSIC SWISS CHEESE HAVE PASSIONATELY REMAINED TRUE TO THE HISTORICAL PRODUCTION METHODS"

MULTIPLE ICONIC OPTIONS AVAILABLE

The three ages of Le Gruyere 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



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