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SPECIALITY FOOD

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the May edition of *Speciality Food*. As I type, the team and I are preparing to head off to the Farm Shop & Deli Show - hopefully we will have said hi to many of you there! The event is one of several we attend throughout the year, and as well as being fantastic for networking and catching up with new and familiar faces, they're where we see what's hot in fine food and drink, uncover new trends, and make discoveries which we use to formulate our content and inspire you. In this edition, we've dedicated a whole section to our Trendsetters of 2024, taking cue from those shows and events, as well as industry experts and insiders. In addition to highlighting the trends you need to know, we share lots of cool products to introduce to your customers. Something else we're incredibly proud of this month is our *Cheese Buyer* publication. We adore cheese at *Speciality Food* (some of us too much) and this magazine gives us the opportunity to share that passion, industry knowledge, and profiles of some of the sector's bestselling products. We hope you enjoy it!

CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS | EDITOR (MATERNITY COVER)
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Don’t forget about Fairtrade

One of the most enduring markers of ethical trading is 30 this year, and more needs to be done to support it, say insiders

When it comes to aligning with customer values, there’s a lot for retailers to unpack. Whether products are organic, or plastic free, sourced from a B Corp, HSFF friendly. These rather contemporary (but important) considerations have led, unwittingly, to Fairtrade messaging being left behind, say some specialist retailers.

As the Fairtrade mark celebrates three decades in 2024, these retailers, the Fairtrade Foundation, and wholesalers and producers making and selling Fairtrade products, say the public needs to be reminded that although supporting British farmers and ensuring food security in the UK is important, we cannot leave overseas producers behind.

Why Fairtrade still matters

Anne Durnford of The Fairtrade Shop in Suffolk said she and the other founders felt it was the “right thing to do” to open a store stocking only Fairtrade food, drink and other products “to help people exploited by the food we expect to have every day. We had them over a barrel. Our farmers can’t grow coffee and tea and rice. It’s not possible. If we are going to import it, I feel very strongly we should pay the people who produced it for us a living wage." And, she implored, "more retailers need to add Fairtrade products to their stock to create demand,” she implored. “If it’s there, people will buy it!"

A spokesperson from the Fairtrade Foundation, said while affordability and fair pricing have become increasingly important for people in the UK, they remain essential for farmers and agricultural workers overseas.

Now, more than ever, the Foundation explained, Fairtrade producers need people in the UK to buy their products.

“After the COP27 summit, it struck home how our planet will be a much hotter place in the coming decade,” the spokesperson said. “Communities in climate-vulnerable nations will be at the mercy of unpredictable weather events. These include extreme temperatures, devastating droughts, hurricanes and floods.

“Cocoa farmers in Ghana told us during their last harvest that they don’t see a future in the crop because it’s now so difficult to grow. Research backs this up. Meanwhile 93% of Fairtrade coffee farmers surveyed in Kenya said they are already experiencing the effects of climate change and reported more erratic rainfall and an increase in pests and diseases, like thrips and coffee berry disease. This is the future that farmers around the world now face, and it endangers their ability to grow our favourite foods in the future.”

The UK imports approximately 40% of its food, around 15% of which is sourced from low-income countries. “So we, as a nation of shoppers and traders, have a vested interest in a continuous supply of good quality imports. If farming doesn’t pay, there’s no guarantee producers will keep growing cocoa and coffee, for example, and UK shoppers might face a future where these popular products are harder to come by.”

Wholesaler Suma, which stocks a wide range of Fairtrade products, said its customers are united in their desire for sustainable and ethical products - especially everyday items like tea, coffee and sugar, through to treats like chocolate and handmade gifts. Fairtrade messaging is important to the company, a Suma spokesperson added. “All Suma’s coffees are Fairtrade certified and organic, and many are grown by worker co-ops. We’re always keen to support our fellow co-operatives, so sourcing our organic coffees from co-operatives from around the world is a great opportunity for us and them. By making the small switch to Fairtrade, we can all support producers in protecting the future of some of our most-loved food and the planet.”

Inspiring customers

Retailers need to tell shoppers about their Fairtrade lines, and the stories of the people behind the products, said the Fairtrade Foundation. And these conversations should happen year-round, not just within the confines of Fairtrade Fortnight in September.



Telling consumers about the “difference Fairtrade makes to the stability provided by long term trading relationships, fairer incomes, plus the impact of the Premium payments in their communities, enabling farmers to tackle climate change and other challenges to protect their crops, makes a strong case for buying Fairtrade,” a spokesperson said.

Suma added that understanding of Fairtrade is probably higher than for other standards. “It’s been around for a while and has been promoted well.

"From a consumer’s perspective, though, they probably don’t need to know the ins and outs of Fairtrade. It’s most important that there’s an understanding that by buying Fairtrade, the producers are getting a fair price.

"The important thing is ensuring that consumers know the difference between the Fairtrade marque and other standards established by brands themselves.

“Retailers can make the most of Fairtrade products in a range of ways – including allocating space for Fairtrade items with some additional information in window displays, at the tills and in other prominent spaces. The Fairtrade Foundation has great materials available to download and order. Tastings, giveaways, competitions and special offers on Fairtrade products are a good way to gain footfall too.”



'Weather won't rain on our parade'



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES

Easter parades still happen in the USA and used to be very big things. Many towns and communities had one, although they are declining in frequency it appears from recent evidence.

New York City's parade, often regarded as the grandest, still goes ahead, although attendance levels have dropped from an estimated 1 million people in 1947 to just 30,000 in 2008.

Their popularity originally grew spontaneously to celebrate not only an important religious festival and the end of the period of Lent, but also the arrival of spring.

Their decline has been put down to the fall in religious observance and the increasing rise of alternative commercial activities.

Often the blame for this falls on the shoulders of food retailers.

However, from an independent shopkeeper's perspective, despite its history as a major national event, in terms of retail sales, Easter often seems to be something of a damp squib – and particularly damp this year. I read somewhere that it has been the wettest 18 months since records started. But it is not only down to the weather.

Easter eggs and chocolate displays were novelties in the 1970s when I first started out, but now festoon shelves everywhere, and it is not easy to gain any point of difference. Similarly, the Easter school holidays confuse any attempt at trying to predict customer numbers. I used to think that an early Easter was better than a late Easter in terms of sales, but this does not stand up to the performance of recent Easters. And finally, although it is not just about my old friend the weather, it is at its most capricious at this time of year.

So, looking at our performance in 2024 so far, after an OK-ish January and a decidedly dodgy February, any hopes that Easter would gallop over the hill to the rescue have not been realised. Our Easter 2024 Good Friday to Easter Monday sales were slightly up on 2023 at 2.7%, but slightly down on 2022 by 1.4%. Nothing much to celebrate bearing in mind the increasing cost of supplies.

Incidentally, sales were up in 2021 by 7.7% and in 2020 by 29% compared to 2024 but they were in Covid times and sales generally were all over the place. In short it all makes interpreting the Easter period very difficult.

And then the week after Easter historically shows a dramatic fall in sales as the effect of school holidays and absent regular customers kicks in.

In 2021, the week after Easter there was a decline in sales of 29% on the previous week, in 2022 it was 38%, in 2023 20% and in 2024 also 20%. Thank goodness we managed to sell most of our stock this year.

But spring is here - perhaps our favourite time of the year on Planet Partridges. More customers, busier markets, better weather and our second best quarter for sales.

Time to exchange the glass half empty for the glass half full and the Easter tirade to the summer parade.
Fingers crossed..

> "Spring is here - perhaps our favourite time of the year on Planet Partridges. More customers, busier markets, better weather and our second best quarter for sales. Time to exchange the glass half empty for the glass half full and the Easter tirade to the summer parade"



New law set to protect shop workers

Bira, the British Independent Retailers Association, has welcomed the government's decision to make assaulting a shop worker a separate criminal offence in both England and Wales.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the new law aims to send a clear message to criminals at a time when retail theft and abuse of shop workers are both on the rise.

Andrew Goodacre, CEO of Bira, said the sector has been crying out for greater protections for retail staff. "For some time Bira, along with the wider retail sector, has been calling for more protection for people who work in shops. We are delighted with this announcement, especially as we are dealing with a significant increase in retail crime."

He added, "While we're encouraged by the government's commitment to tackle this unacceptable abuse, these figures underscore the need for real reform and resources to ensure shopkeepers feel protected. Bira and the entire retail community appreciate this vital first step."

Under the new law, the offence of assaulting a shop worker will carry a maximum sentence of six months and perpetrators could also receive an unlimited fine, and ban from the premises where the offence was committed.

Repeat offenders may be forced to wear tags to track their movements, and £50million is to be spent on facial recognition technology, with dedicated units placed on high streets to catch criminals, and prevent shoplifting.

In more serious cases, those found guilty of GBH (grievous bodily harm) will face jail sentences. However anyone convicted of the new offence would not routinely go to prison. The Sentencing Bill, would mean sentences of 12 months or less would be suspended and served in the community, although a prison sentence could be imposed in exceptional circumstances.

The desperate need for action has been underscored by Bira's own 2024 retail crime survey which revealed 35.5% respondents experienced verbal abuse from individuals in their shops (down 7.5% from the prior six months), with 66% of those affected choosing not to report the incident.

For those incidents reported to police, 29% said authorities did not attend the scene, and where police did respond, around 57% of cases did not lead to prosecution.

Physical attacks and threats remain prevalent too, as nearly 8% of shopkeepers said in the report they experienced violence, including being threatened with needles, knives and hammers. Around 70% did not report these incidents to police.





Brits want to see more UK-made products on shelves

New research, conducted by Made in Britain, has identified that nearly 60% of UK consumers want to see more products made on home soil in retail.

Of those surveyed, 50% said they prefer to buy UK-manufactured goods over imported alternatives, with the main driver being a desire to support the economy and British jobs.

The annual survey revealed that, despite ongoing financial pressures due to the cost-of-living crisis, 65% of those asked said they continue to buy the same amount of British goods, with a clear preference to buy British food. UK-grown fruit and vegetables were favoured by 72%, while 69% are keen to support British meat, and 57% fish.

Supporting native workers was the most significant driver, followed by a keenness to be more sustainable, consumers putting more trust in British-made goods and ethical production standards, and lastly (43%) the perception that British food and drink is better quality.



Made in Britain CEO, John Pearce, said, "As consumer activism pushes up demand for British products on UK supermarket shelves, the widely-recognised Made in Britain trademark helps shoppers instantly identify UK-made products on the high street and online, while providing British manufacturers with an instantly recognisable and trusted marketing symbol that helps them capitalise on public demand for goods produced on home shores.

"Our ever-growing community of manufacturers tell us they proudly display the trademark for three key reasons – it is the most effective way to communicate what type of company they are; it helps them sell more of what they make; and it bolsters trust and recognition for their brands."

Defra responds to concerns over Farming Recovery Fund



Responding to concerns raised by NFU vice president Rachel Hellos, Defra has confirmed it has altered its Farming Recovery Fund.

Following devastating weather events in the early part of 2024, including Storm Henk, Defra announced a package of support for farmers in affected areas this April. Shortly after praising the scheme, the NFU released a statement citing "major issues" with the fund. Hellos said, "We are hearing from numerous members who have suffered catastrophic impacts, who have been told they are not eligible for the fund because some of their affected areas are more than 150 meters from 'main rivers'. These include members with 90% of their land saturated or underwater, and huge damage to buildings and equipment."

She continued, "I cannot believe this is what ministers intended when they first launched the fund, which was a welcome and well-intentioned development."

In response farming minister, Mark Spencer, said, "We want to make sure the Farming Recovery Fund offers the support farmers need to recover from uninsurable damage. It's why we've listened and responded to feedback on the launch of the initial phase of this scheme, fully removing the 150 meter limit.

"This means that farmers will be able to receive payments for all land parcels which are flooded contiguous to an eligible river. We'll continue to listen to farmers and look at how we can expand the scheme and improve support for those affected."

The Farming Recovery Fund was drawn up to support farmers who suffered uninsurable damage to land due to flooding in the early part of 2024, with those eligible able to access grants of £500 to £25,000 to cover recultivation costs. It is aimed at businesses in Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Somerset, Warwickshire, West Northamptonshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire, with the NFU, at the time, saying ministers who had driven it forward "will have the thanks of many of our members for whom it will be a lifeline."

Hallos said, "People should be in no doubt about the immense pressure UK farm businesses are under thanks to this unprecedented and constant rain. It's no exaggeration to say a crisis is building. While farmers are bearing the brunt of it now, consumers may well see the effects through the year as produce simply doesn't leave the farm gate."

Farmers are being contacted by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) outlining support available to them, and how they can make a claim.

The Farm Recovery Fund is part of a broader scheme, the Flood Recovery Framework, which is activated in exceptional circumstances to support councils and communities following severe flooding.

The last year has seen exceptionally heavy rainfall across the UK, with 2023 named the sixth wettest since records began in 1836.

The government has protected 900,000 acres of agricultural land from the impact of flooding, and is investing £5.6 billion to further protect hundreds of thousands of properties, particularly in rural areas.





Campaigners call for ban on all single-use food and drink packaging

Environmental group City to Sea and campaigners from 38 Degrees have come together to call for a ban on single-use packaging for food and drink served to eat-in at restaurants, cafes and bars across the UK.

They hope their petition will influence the government to follow French legislation introduced in 2023, which could see 180,000 tonnes of packaging saved every year.

Plastic pollution remains one of the UK's biggest environmental issues, and campaigners believe current rules (which don't affect plastic containers filled with food or drink at the point of sale), don't go far enough.

Steve Hynd, policy manager at City to Sea, said, "There are some areas of life where getting rid of single-use packaging and plastics is really hard. The takeaway sector is one of them. So first tackling the hundreds of thousands of tons of packaging used in eat-in settings is a painfully obvious step.

"Single-use cups, boxes and plates are wasteful, unnecessary and can easily be avoided by replacing single-use packaging with reusable cups, crockery and cutlery which get washed instead of thrown away after just one use."

He continued, "This isn't pie-in-the-sky thinking or even a new idea. It's how food always used to be served. And it's already law in neighbouring countries like France. If you walk into any food outlet in France, even fast-food restaurants like McDonalds, your meal will now be served in 'reusable packaging' - usually just a plate and cutlery. If France can do it, so can we."

Grace de Blaca, campaign manager at 38 Degrees, added, "The last time City to Sea and 38 Degrees joined forces, we helped more than 100,000 people call for a ban on some of our most polluting single-use plastics - and we won. Now, it's time to take on the pointless plastic pollution scourge of eat-in restaurants."

More than 30 NGOs, including City to Sea, have written to negotiators calling for the ban to be included in future PPWR (Packaging and Packaging Waste) regulations, to cover establishments with more than 20 covers, minimising impact on smaller retailers.

The petition, available to view on the 38 Degrees website, has already been signed by nearly 25,000 people.



Nominate your groundbreaking, rising food and drink stars of 2024

Who do you think deserves recognition this year as we shine a spotlight on some of food and drink's most remarkable entrepreneurs?

It takes gumption, tenacity and passion to get a new business off the ground – especially if you're spreading your wings in the speciality food and drink sector.

From conceiving an original idea, to gaining funding, scaling up production and marketing, there is a mountain to climb towards success.

The founders of Speciality & Fine Food Fair recognise this success as a tremendous achievement – one to be celebrated. This pinnacle event in the speciality food and drink diary is proud to have helped many businesses take their first steps in the industry via its highly regarded Start-Up Village.

In commemoration of Speciality & Fine Food Fair's landmark 25th anniversary, organiser Montgomery Group is collaborating with *Speciality Food* magazine to mark the achievements of 25 of the most exciting new rising stars and entrepreneurs in food and drink today. Each Rising Star will be profiled within a dedicated section of the June magazine, and honoured at Speciality & Fine Food Fair during the event from 10th to 11th September 2024.

Event manager, Nicola Woods, said, "We are thrilled to be marking the 25th anniversary of Speciality & Fine Food Fair by recognising 25 of the most exciting rising stars in the world of speciality food and drink, in partnership with *Speciality Food* magazine. Our industry is packed with entrepreneurs who are blazing a trail, driving innovation, and inspiring the sector. Since the very beginning one of the core goals of the fair has been providing a platform to these individuals and supporting their future growth and success. We can't wait to read the nominations for our Rising Stars and celebrate with you at this year's event."

Charlotte Smith-Jarvis of *Speciality Food* magazine, said, "Our magazine shares a history of more than two decades with Speciality & Fine Food Fair, and we align with the event on our values of showcasing the very best of the artisan food and drink world. Our team is delighted to be partnering with Montgomery Group to recognise the significant achievements of some of food and drink's most luminary, inspirational entrepreneurs, who not only deliver delicious, category-leading products, but also demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practices, driving change, and creating the 'next big thing'.

"We're very excited to be able to platform some truly exceptional people alongside Speciality & Fine Food Fair this autumn."

HOW TO ENTER

We are on the hunt for passionate, driven, and creative individuals who've developed new brands that have disrupted the market, grown exponentially and sustainably in a short space of time, or been at the cusp of innovation, blazing a trail for others to follow.

And we need your help to seek out the most worthy candidates for recognition this year. Please join us in our quest to honour the next generation of food and drink business leaders by nominating them via the QR code on this page.

Your nomination can be for any food and drink business founder in the speciality sector. Founders may also nominate themselves for recognition.

The closing date for entries is May 10, 2024.

Cotswold Fayre recertifies as a B Corp with its highest ever score

Award-winning speciality food and drink wholesaler, Cotswold Fayre, has re-certified as a B Corp with a score of 117.8 - 10 points higher than its previous certification in 2020.

Cotswold Fayre was one of the first B Corps in the UK in 2015, but this fourth certification is particularly pleasing for the company as the rigorous audit included its new food hall and kitchen, Flourish, for the first time.

Employing more than 100 people and operating a much more diverse business added to the complexity of the B Corp audit this time around, and the company is delighted to have achieved a higher score than most of the other B Corp food and drink businesses in the UK.

Paul Hargreaves, founder and CEO, said, "We are delighted to celebrate our highest B Corp score in this, our 25th birthday year. Clearly our business still has much to do to improve its social and environmental impact, but to have a 10 point improvement when the B Corp bar is much higher than our last certification is really pleasing."

There are now more than 2,000 B Corps in the UK, making it the fastest growing B Corp community in the world. Cotswold Fayre stocks 75 B Corp suppliers today, compared to only six in April 2020, which gives an indication of how fast the recent uptake has been in the FMCG sector.

Public back greater government intervention for healthy food access

A new poll, ordered by the Food, Farming and Commission (FFC), has unearthed the 'real food crisis' in Britain.

Four in five asked (80%), believe healthy food is something everyone should be able to have, yet only 8% think it is affordable to most, and 69% say it is the government's job to enable the British public to have healthier diets amid mounting financial pressures.

The next phase of The Food Conversation is to find urgent solutions to the UK's food crisis, with a series of in-depth workshops taking place nationwide, asking representative groups what they want from food and how they want to see things change.

Sue Pritchard, CEO of the FFC, said, "Of all the elements of our everyday economy, one of the things we simply cannot manage without is healthy food. Food is now at the centre of some of the biggest challenges this country faces and, for many people, eating enough healthy food is becoming impossible.

"What we are hearing from citizens, is that many of the things people care most about relate to food. People tell us they are concerned about the inequalities of a system that means poor children will live shorter lives than rich ones. They are sympathetic to the challenges facing family farmers who are dealing with the impacts of climate change on their businesses. And they are worried about an NHS buckling under the pressure of diet-related ill health.

While difficult – this is all fixable. And as we talk to people all around the UK, it's clear that citizens see the problem and want the government to take control of a situation that has become untenable."



External advisory group launched for Scottish Net Zero Programme

Experts from food businesses, NGOs and science backgrounds have been brought together to form an external advisory group for the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership Net Zero Programme.

Created to help the industry meet its Net Zero commitment by 2045, the group is chaired by professor Sir Ian Boyd, co-chair of the First Minister's Environmental Council, and biology professor at the University of St Andrews. It will support the sector by providing new insights and advice, exploring new opportunities, and leading conversations on the role of food and drink in the wider national effort to reach Net Zero emissions.

The commitment is integral to the 10-year national food and drink strategy: 'Sustaining Scotland, Supplying the World', and the programme has been pooling resources from across the sector to accelerate action since its inception during COP26 in 2021.

Iain Clunie, Net Zero Programme director (pictured), said, "Scotland has huge potential to be a global leader in climate-friendly food production, and there is an obligation on us to grasp that opportunity.

"That is why we created the external advisory group; to support the Scottish food and drink industry's Net Zero plans to ensure that we deliver on our climate targets and make the most of the evolving market opportunities presented by sustainable food products. One of the group's first tasks will be navigating the complex issue of the just transition - what does it mean for the Scottish food and drink industry and how can we deliver on it?"

Professor Sir Ian Boyd added, "We can all see that climate change has already had a severe impact on food security last winter, with the scarce availability of certain fruit and vegetables due to the severe weather conditions in the Mediterranean. With the new advisory group, we hope to accelerate efforts of the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership's Net Zero journey.

"It was refreshing to see food security taking precedence at COP28 last November, with 134 countries signing on to a first-of-its-kind declaration pledging to put food systems and agriculture at the heart of their climate ambitions, and this lends itself well to customers' demand for more sustainable food options. Scotland has an ambition to be at the forefront of the international community on sustainable food and drink production and the advisory group will play a pivotal role in realising that ambition."







FDF says 'not for EU' labelling threatens to reverse export growth

'Confusing' labels on British products ('Not for EU') could have a huge impact on exports from the UK, the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) says.

In its most recent end of year Trade Snapshot report, taking into account the period from January to December 2023, the FDF found the UK's largest manufacturing sector had a total export value of just below £25 billion, a decrease of 2% year on year. This reflects a succession of shocks the food and drink industry has been burdened with, from high inflation and Brexit, to the impact of the war in Ukraine, with only pork and cheese seeing growth in both value and volume.

There was a glimmer of hope as Ireland became Britain's first ever export market to reach £4 billion, according to the report – an increase of 6.4%, which demonstrates how important the country is for trade. Imports have also increased by £200 million, buoyed by sales of cheese, savoury snacks and chocolate.

However, says the body, the introduction of mandatory GB-wide 'Not for EU' labelling (expected to be rolled out on all goods by 2025) poses a considerable threat to supply chains, especially to Ireland, with the FDF saying it thinks the labels will "almost certainly result in growth being reversed in our largest export market".

It estimates the implementation costs to be in the region of £150 million to £200 million.

Balwinder Dhoot, director of industrial growth and sustainability at the FDF, said, "Selling our products overseas helps our businesses and the wider economy. In a challenging trading environment, it was good to see the value of exports to the EU increase slightly. But government proposals to introduce "Not for EU" labels across the whole of GB will undermine trade with these markets. It's baffling why the government would want to implement something so damaging, that will reduce investment, push up prices for shoppers, whilst delivering a real blow to our exports just at the time when our businesses need more support."

Dhoot continued, "There are better solutions, including digital ones, which businesses support. We're urging the government to remain open to these rather than imposing their own, rather analogue, and backward-looking proposals."

The report also shows that non-EU exports have fallen by 6%, and suggests more free trade agreements would help boost this figure as it urges the government to take a "balanced and careful approach" with new FTAs, such as in India.

Imports of food and drink increased by 5.1%, driven largely by an 8.6% rise in EU markets, with fruit remaining Britain's largest import, and Spain, South African and Peru making up more than 35% of all imports to the UK.

An ongoing review into the risk categorisation of fruit and vegetables included in the Border Target Operating Model, as well as tariff reviews with Egypt, Morocco, and South Africa, will encourage non-EU import, and could allow the UK to diversify supply chains. "Although, we must be careful not to put up unnecessary barriers with our most important trading partner, the EU," a spokesperson from the FDF said.

The report also focuses on trade with Australia, showing that exports are yet to reach full potential. And Switzerland is highlighted. "With modest UK exports, reducing high tariffs through an updated FTA could help boost exports. With a new UK trade policy, FTAs away from the EU will be new territory for many businesses and the government must ensure there is easy online guidance for businesses can take advantage of these new opportunities."

> "Government proposals to introduce 'Not for EU' labels across the whole of GB will undermine trade"

Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Two Farmers launches premium craft ciders

Plastic-free artisan crisp brand, Two Farmers, has recently brought to market two ciders, made with 100% Herefordshire produce.

Ideal for the discerning drinker, and crafted with passion, the duo includes Medium Dry Cider (a bright, golden drop, with the freshness of crisp apple), and Pixley Berries Fruit Cider (balancing plump juicy berries with apple in perfect harmony).

Sean Mason of Two Farmers says, "We think the best cider fruit is grown just south of Ledbury, Herefordshire (in our local parish). Nestled on the Marcle Ridge, the orchards have the perfect limestone soil and microclimate to grow outstanding cider fruit including the famous Michelin and Dabinett apple varieties. The acidity and sweetness in our apples are beautifully balanced, which combines to make outstanding Two Farmers Cider."

Business partner, Mark Green, adds, "The Pixley Berries Fruit Cider is produced using our neighbour's world-renowned strawberry, raspberry and blackcurrant fruits which are freshly harvested from their farm in Pixley. The Two Farmers ethos is about locally grown and made with minimum food miles. Our ciders are all 100% Herefordshire produce. The perfect pint with your next packet of award-winning Two Farmers Crisps!"

The pair have worked with cider experts Matt Slocombe and Nick Ingham to develop the range. Matt says, "Nick and I are delighted to have teamed up with Mark and Sean to create Two Farmers Cider. We slowly ferment the best Herefordshire cider fruit, let nature take its course and then blend with only natural ingredients to deliver the crisp, clean and fresh flavours that are full of natural apple taste."

twofarmers.co.uk



Maldon Salt extends foodservice range

Following the successful launch of Maldon Salt's new flavoured products into the retail market last year, the seasoning expert has answered calls from the foodservice sector to offer its Garlic Sea Salt and Chilli Sea Salt in larger, catering-sized formats.

Available now, each of the salts will be available in a 500g tub.

Maldon's new Garlic Sea Salt is an expert blend of the brand's hand-harvested flakes with wild and roasted garlic, while Maldon Chilli Sea Salt offers a spicy, aromatic taste, ideal for adding instant heat to dishes or even adding a point of difference to premium cocktails and mocktails.

Maldon Salt commercial director, Robert La Francesca, says, "We're delighted to be able to launch the latest two additions to our flavoured salt range in a larger, 500g format. We know the pressures that professional kitchens are under and our Garlic and Chilli Sea Salts offer chefs and caterers the ability to elevate dishes with ease, boosting flavour and seasoning to perfection in one hit. To continue to support the Maldon Salt Garlic and Chilli Sea Salt range, we will be running a 360-degree national marketing campaign throughout May, which will include sampling, a digital, social and influencer programme, alongside a programme of activations and events."

maldonsalt.com





New high-protein pasta launches

Windmill Organics has recently added a range of high-protein orzo pastas to its Profusion brand – meeting the growing demand for protein-packed, functional food.

Orzo, also known as risoni, is a form of short-cut wheat flour pasta, shaped like a large grain of rice. It's been growing in popularity thanks to its quick cooking time and flexibility. Profusion's orzo is made with 100% chickpeas or red lentils – making it a high-protein, fibre-filled, gluten-free option.

Noel McDonald, founder and director of Windmill Organic, says, "The ethos of our Profusion brand is about extracting the most nutrient-dense foods from the plant world and combining them cleverly, to create fuel perfect for active bodies and brains. And with that in mind, we're delighted to announce the arrival of this new gluten-free orzo range, and are confident the combination of high protein content, vegan-friendly, and organic attributes will ensure it's a hit amongst flexitarians, vegans, eco and health-conscious consumers, and a whole variety of shoppers with specific dietary needs."

windmillorganics.com

Dairy-free brand unveils new barista-style oat milk

Rude Health has just brought to market its newest dairy-free drink – Organic Oat Barista. Four years in the making, the milk is being pitched as the perfect partner for coffee lovers, and has a clean deck of just four ingredients – spring water, organic oats, organic cold-pressed sunflower oil, and sea salt.

A high oat content of 14% ensures it will froth up for creamy coffees, while lending a natural sweetness.

Rude Health co-founder, Camilla Barnard, says, "With the foundations of the Barista category having been laid, there is still significant opportunity for growth. 'Barista', 'oat' and 'organic' are all growth drivers. The shelf is currently dominated by long ingredients lists with emulsifiers, stabilisers and acidity regulators, and we know consumers are not only looking for great functionality and brilliant taste, but clean deck, organic ingredients. We've used our years of dairy-free drink experience to craft what we believe is the ultimate trade up, and we can't wait to hear what our customers think."

rudehealth.com





James White unveils Veg It



Former customers of James White Drinks' V8 juice should be delighted as the brand launches Veg it.

Providing one portion of vegetables per serving, the juice packs in tomatoes, carrots, beetroots, celery, sauerkraut, leeks, cress and parsley.

"I think people will be astonished how great Veg It tastes," says owner Lawrence Mallinson. "This is the product that will finally convince the Great British public that vegetable juices are the best thing since sliced bread.

"They are much lower in sugars than conventional fruit juices, yet are just as tasty and even more nutritious. Veg It was developed very much with the objective of satisfying the former V8 customer taste wise, while using superior ingredients."

jameswhite.co.uk



Pip Organic expands into snack bar category

New 100% organic fruit bars, Pipsticks, are the latest launch from Pip Organics. Made with no added sugar or preservatives, packed with fibre, and accounting for one of your five a day, they make ideal snacks, and picnic or lunch box fillers.

The products are available in two flavours – Mango, and Pineapple & Mango. With sustainability in mind, Pipsticks are made only with organic produce, and are created using renewable energy generated by fruit waste.

The brand was founded by husband and wife Patrick and Karen O'Flaherty, who previously ran an organic juice stall on London's Borough Market, and were inspired to create healthy drinks and treats while bringing up their children.

piporganic.com



Proper Snacks spices up its offering

The maker of Propercorn has launched a new range of Properchips, powered by chickpeas. Proper Snacks' latest addition comes in three tongue tingling flavours – Ghost Chilli & Yuzu, Jerk Sauce, and Katsu Curry, all inspired by global cuisine.

Properchips contain less than 100 calories per serving, and are HFSS compliant, while also being vegan, gluten free and seasoned with natural flavours. Each pack has been illustrated by artist Ewa Lefmann, with every flavour having its own unique 'character'. Sharing and grab bag formats are available.

Proper Snacks founder, Cassandra Stavrou, says, "I'm addicted to the yuzu and ghost chilli chips. These flavours seriously deliver, and I'm so proud of the team for once again creating snacks that don't compromise. This is what we mean by 'done properly'. I can't wait for everyone to try them."

proper.co.uk

Popular Mallow & Marsh treat returns

Following hot demand, Mallow & Marsh has brought back its much-loved Coconut Mallow Bar. The customer favourite initially launched in 2017, becoming a bestseller, and it is being relaunched with a new recipe that retains its special flavour.

Commercial and marketing lead, Jonathan Burr, says, "Our consumer research showed us that coconut comes out top for our customers, so we listened to this feedback and decided it was time to bring the nostalgic flavour to our core range." He adds that he has "no doubt the new flavour will be a welcome return for our loyal customers. Within the first 10 days of its online soft launch, the product sold out within 60 minutes of being on sale. We hope it will also attract solus shoppers to the category and brand too."

Based in Harrogate, Mallow & Marsh's products are free of artificial colours, flavourings and palm oil, and use the best ingredients, including Fairtrade Belgian chocolate.

mallowandmarsh.com



Two new mixes from Niche Cocktails

RTD brand, Niche Cocktails, has added to its range of bar strength, premium canned drinks, launching two new products – Wild Strawberry Daiquiri, and Negroni.

The Daiquiri delicately balances The English Distillery's rum with fresh lime, syrup and strawberries, while the Negroni boasts that classic, aperitivo-style taste, built on a base of Adnams' award-winning Copper House Gin.

"These two launches add exciting new flavour profiles to our range of premium cocktails," says CEO Rob Breakwell, adding, "We have big plans for the rest of 2024. Last year we heavily invested in the brand with a complete new look and two fantastic drinks partnerships that not only elevate the flavour profiles of our cocktails, but increase customer confidence. Now we are delighted with the latest additions to our range, and hope these will help push Niche Cocktails to become the number one RTD cocktail brand in the UK."

nichecocktails.co.uk





CHILL OUT WITH COLD BREWS

With warmer days on the horizon, now's the time to explore a growing drinks category that's taking off in the UK



COMMENTATORS



CANDICE MASON
MOTHER CUPPA



ANGELA PRYCE
SENIOR TEA AND COFFEE BUYER



RYAN MOORE
BLENDSMITHS



AMIR MONTAZER
ETUDE COFFEE

Tea and coffee punctuate our lives in Britain. They're what we grab on the way to work, or as we're kicking our shoes off at the end of a busy day. A cuppa is what many of us crave when we return from holiday, with a brew often the top priority once those suitcases have been lugged in from the car.

Figures from the British Coffee Association reveal we drink an average 98 million cups of coffee a day in the UK, with tea just pipping this to the post at around 100 million.

But our daily ritual is no longer as predictable as a hot cup of cha and a biscuit. HFSS regulations, alcohol moderation, and the desire for ever 'cleaner', more functional drinks has driven a stream of innovations in this sector. Where the to-go area in stores was once dominated by colas and high-sugar fruit sodas, now sit kombucha, gut-friendly fizz, flavoured sparkling waters, and a growing number of RTD cold brew teas and coffees.

Consumers are increasingly seeking out non-traditional iced drinks in cafe and foodservice settings too.

Tea sommelier Candice Mason of Mother Cuppa says the cold brew trend is really taking off. "More and more people are looking for healthy ways to care for their bodies, and many are reducing caffeine and alcohol," she explains. "I posted a reel last summer for a few cold brews, and people loved them!"

According to Mintel, RTD tea is being sought out by the 'sober curious', while Mordor Intelligence points to demand for cold brew coffee growing due to our busy lifestyles, saying the "excellent source of instant energy is becoming popular amongst youngsters and the middle-aged working population." It cites functionality, innovation, and new flavours and tastes as trends in the cold brew and RTD coffee category.

It's clear that RTD tea and coffee could prove a strong investment in fine food retail, but what about the in-store experience?

The cold market is strong

Senior tea and coffee buyer Angela Pryce, who has worked as a buyer, taster and blender for two decades, has a deep understanding of developing markets, and says cafes and foodservice outlets offering a form of cold brew coffee or tea this year will be moving in the right direction.

She says chilled tea "lends itself really well as a different way of serving tea, which has traditionally always been served hot."

But to hit the mark, some preparation is needed. "The teas need to be brewed, and chilled down. It's a case of making them the day before, or in the morning, to get ahead. I think it's a great, cost-effective way of selling tea and herbal infusions, and a healthier alternative to a soft drink. The flavours are brilliant, and tea is a natural product that's naturally sugar free and calorie free, provided it's not served with sugar."

From a technical perspective, unlike coffee, which can be brewed with cold water, Angela says it's important to always brew tea with boiling water. "This is because it's not specced to be brewed cold. Teas and herbal teas are not necessarily heat treated in the production process."

Though she adds technology has moved on, with more and more products becoming available specifically for cold brewing. The company she is working for currently, for example, has just released a range of four cold brew teabags.

"With tea, in general," Angela says, "if you're wanting to serve it cold you can do it a couple of ways. One, brew it hot and then chill it in the fridge. Or brew a concentrate, make it double strength, and pout it over ice – then it's ready immediately."

Green tea works well, she adds. And "oolong tea is beautiful cold, because of its profile, being quite light, crisp and astringent. It really suits this brewing method."

Angela also points towards tropical flavours as being 'hot' in 2024. "Tropical is everywhere in the cold market at the moment!"

Candice suggests hibiscus and mint as being perfect options for cold brewing. "Hibiscus is fruity and sweet, and mint is refreshing. They are great in a non-alcoholic gin or 'nosecco' mocktail. I also love an elderflower and rooibos cold brew tea." Angela says to avoid cold brewing black tea, which would be overly tannic and bitter, sticking to green, oolong or white for a gentler flavour profile.

She sees these kinds of drinks

> "Consumers know their chai and matcha and turmeric lattes, and they're looking for something exciting, and expecting to see things they've never had before"
>
> **RYAN MOORE, BLENDSMITHS**







becoming increasingly prolific in both home and retail/cafe settings as consumers look to reduce the amount of sugar in their diets. "Sometimes water on its own can be a bit boring. Cold brew tea is a fabulous way to hydrate your body. My herbal tea can taste like a sweeter drink, with no sugar, so it makes a great alternative."

Thinking outside the box

Ryan Moore of Blendsmiths, which crafts premium hot chocolates, chai, matcha, and superfood blends, says being creative, and thinking of new ways to prepare and present drinks traditionally associated with the colder months, can open a window for cafe operators to add value to their offering.

"It's about being able to show the versatility of hot drinks all-year-round. We're finding a lot of people, especially younger people on social media, are using our products cold, and maybe topping them with yoghurt, or adding fruit."

You "put the powder in a jug with milk and steam it, but you can do exactly the same process and make them cold, blending them with ice for the most amazing iced latte, iced chocolate or iced matcha. I would say 5% of our customers are making our drinks cold, but I still get asked a lot if you can do it, and I'm like 'yeah'!"

Ryan is about to launch new drinks tapping into the cold market, based on colour, and using ingredients such as blue pea flower extract. He says it's critical not to stand still as there's strong demand every year for the 'next big thing'. "With migration, and people moving around and living and travelling all over the world, there is an expectation to have something different. Consumers know their chai and matcha and turmeric lattes, and they're looking for something exciting, and expecting to see things they've never had before – and that's where these drinks come into play."

Opening later for latte

Amir Montazar of Etude Coffee is excited by the way interest in cold brew is opening up new opportunities – which he thinks could lead to cafes opening later, bridging the gap in the late afternoon before customers head to bars or restaurants, as is the case in many parts of Europe.



"At Silo [one of Amir's cafes], we had a lot of requests for iced drinks in 2023," he says. "In the UK we are having longer and warmer summers compared to five years ago. That means we are selling more cold coffees." Amir is also finding his wholesale clients are expanding their cold coffee and coffee-based drink menus in response to customer demand.

There are different ways to cold brew, Amir says, mentioning the 'Three Ts' - temperature, turbulence and time. "If you increase any of these three your extraction will be faster, and you will get more from your coffee."

He prefers to brew in cold water over a longer time, which brings out the properties and essence of the raw ingredient in the purest way. "I've found it highlights the brightness and acidity of the coffee, rather than the body. It means you can get a slightly different experience from the same coffee than if it was served hot."

Amir prepares cold brew using a higher ratio of coffee to water (1:3 or 1:4). "The result is a very concentrated extract. When you want to serve it, you need to dilute it and that's what I like about it. Dilute it with cold milk to give you a great iced latte. In America they use half and half, which is half cream, half milk, and that would give even more texture, similar to having a flat white."

He prefers to brew a concentrate because of the different options it opens up, and its longevity, with the ability to keep it in the fridge for up to a week.

For the best results "choose a single origin coffee which has a specific character, rather than a generic espresso blend. Blends can muddy the flavour and the joy of a cold brew," Amir says. "For example, if you're using a beautiful coffee from Kenya, you will have all those fruity notes specific to the country and region. It will taste like raspberries or some sort of red fruit. I find that more interesting."

These brews lend themselves naturally to espresso martinis and other mixed beverages which are, says Amir, taking off in a big way. "It's much more difficult to do a martini with a hot brew coffee, and the reason is that hot brew coffee changes character as it cools down. Very quickly your window of using it in a mixer drink is limited, and that's the reason high-end bars prepare an espresso martini with cold brew."

He's seeing "some really interesting things, like chocolate espresso tonic on social media, and mixologists developing more coffee-based cold drinks." And Amir believes interest will only grow, with more cafes looking to become licensed in future, offering low and no-alcohol cold brew options. In fact, he's so confident, he's looking at licensing his own premises. "In a speciality coffee shop the cocktails they would serve would be very focused on the taste rather than alcohol content," Amir says.

"Because of operating times, they would be open only, I think, until 7pm or 8pm. Somewhere you can go to enjoy the afternoon and early evening with a couple of nice, interesting alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks."

Amir believes the growth of premium decaf coffee options will contribute to specialist cafes serving drinks later in the day. "Decaf coffee has improved a lot. We now have really tasty speciality decaf, which is a great option to be added to mixer drinks in the evening without the caffeine to interrupt your night. From a business perspective, with a view to having longer operating times, it makes a lot of sense to apply for a license, and I think we'll see more of that. I'm asked a lot by customers to open later!"



> "I think it's a great, cost-effective way of selling tea and herbal infusions, and a healthier alternative to a soft drink"
>
> **CANDICE MASON, MOTHER CUPPA**

STOCK CHECK

2024 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



PEACH & TURMERIC KOMBUCHA SUMA

An organic kombucha with a base of green tea, with added turmeric and ginseng, and the fresh, bright taste of ripe peach.

suma-store.coop



WATERMELON & HIBISCUS COLD BREW TEAPIGS

A sunshine-filled taste of the Med in a cup. Only three calories per serving, with a naturally light, sweet, fruity flavour.

teapigs.co.uk



PISTACHIO, CARDAMOM, SAFFRON AND 23 CARAT GOLD DRINKING CHOCOLATE THE CHOCOLATIER

An opulent, rich chocolate drink that is utterly indulgent served cooled. With edible gold, floral saffron and aromatic pistachios and cardamom.

the-chocolatier.co.uk



COLD BREW COFFEE CONCENTRATE UNION

The expert roasters have done all the hard work for you with this double strength, 24-hour steeped cold brew, made with single-origin coffee from the Asprotimana Cooperative in Colombia.

unionroasted.com



SUMMER OF LOVE BIRD & BLEND

Ideal for cold brewing. A colourful combination of green tea, chamomile, lavender, calendula, and red and blue cornflowers.

birdandblendtea.com



BEETROOT & GINGER BLEND BLENDSMITHS

A bright, colourful addition to your drinks line-up, combining delicately sweet beetroot with aromatic cinnamon, star anise, ginger and black pepper.

blendsmiths.com



COLD BREW GROUND COFFEE NO. 9 RAVE

Designed specifically for cold brewing, with nutty, chocolatey notes. One 300g pack makes 3lts of cold brew coffee ready to use in iced drinks or cocktails.

ravecoffee.co.uk



CHOCOLATE FUDGE BROWNIE COLD BREW COFFEE TRUESTART COFFEE

Small batch brewed coffee, made with carefully selected Colombian Arabica beans. Bursting with chocolatey notes, but completely sugar free.

truestartcoffee.com



NITRO COLD BREW MOCHA MINOR FIGURES

A natural source of energy. The finest single-origin coffee, brewed for 18 hours. Dairy and sugar free, with a silky mouthfeel.

minorfigures.com



ICED OAT LATTE GRIND

The brand's signature house blend, steeped slowly in cold water and combined with oat milk for a creamy smooth, rich finish.

grind.co.uk

COMMENTATORS



TOM GATEHOUSE
EGG SOLDIERS



KATE KEHOE
FMCG GURUS



VANESSA RICHARDSON
SNACMA



FEDERICO DELLAFIORE
IFE



JENNIFER EARLE
FOOD INNOVATION CONSULTANT



TASH JONES
FAIRFIELDS FARM CRISPS

THE SNACKS TO SNAP UP

The appetite for snacks and on-the-go bites is rising in the UK, but just what are consumers looking for? *Speciality Food* investigates



The snacking market in the UK is storming...and that shows no signs of abating, with analysts at Mintel predicting sales of crisps, savoury snacks and nuts to exceed £7 billion by 2028.

Today, what consumers are reaching for has changed, with serious innovation having transformed this sector. Beyond snuggling up on the sofa with a sharing bag of crisps, or eating a cereal or fruit snack bar on the fly, busy shoppers are relying ever more on snacks to fill nutritional gaps in their diet, boosting their intake of fibre, fruit and veg or functional vitamins and minerals. They're also increasingly interested in ingredient decks, and the 'natural' claims of what they're munching on at their desks, post-gym, or on the school run.

Tom Gatehouse of strategic food consultancy group, Egg Soldiers, says the concept of snacking is evolving as people move away from mealtime norms "in favour of quick, flavourful and affordable options enjoyed throughout the day".

He's noticing brands skewing new product development towards a younger audience, from Millennials and Gen Z to the incoming Gen Alpha, who are considered "the driving force behind the evolution of snacks", with a strong movement forming, revolutionising the look, feel and style of snacks "particularly focussed on being eye-catching to those younger demographics."

For example, "SMUG launched last year as a new UK crisps disruptor, with its first flavour being Cacio e Pepe. Its packaging is 100% compostable, and its branding as eye-catching as they come. This brand is a shining example of how snacking brands can revamp at every turn."

On a global scale, says Kate Kehoe of FMCG Gurus, the afternoon is peak snacking time, with the group's insights revealing 51% of consumers snack between lunch and dinner. Chocolate comes out as top choice, followed by crisps, with 43% saying it's their preferred snack.

Healthier options

Healthful snacking is entering something Tom considers almost a "new dawn", driven by consumers and delivered by exciting new concepts particularly in the functional and natural arenas.

"Lucid, which offers a targeted range of functional mushroom and adaptogenic snack bars, is a good example," Tom says, "with the London-based start-up having both 'de-stress' and 're-vitalise' offerings powered by reishi and lion's mane mushrooms respectively.

The playfulness comes through in both the design and the flavours, which range from banana bread and cookie dough to peanut butter jelly and chocolate hazelnut."

Protein-based snacks, Tom adds, are also key players for retailers to stock. "I've seen some interesting protein-rich, low-fat jerky launches of late, with both meat and meat-free options a health-forward route for brands pushing both at-home and on-the-go snacking benefits."

Of all the health claims on-pack, Kate says sugar content is the most sought-after information consumers are looking for, and FMCG Gurus predicts they will be increasingly mindful of how snacking impacts their health.

This is something that is being considered widely in industry, with a tide of new HFSS compliant products having come to market in the last two years. "We expect to see more HFSS-compliant products hitting the shelves," says Vanessa Richardson of SNACMA (Snack, Nut and Crisp Manufacturers' Association). "Consumers are keen to see healthier products without compromising on flavour." This move is already being reflected in developments at large conglomerates such as PepsiCo, which has an ambition for 50% of its sales to be from HFSS-friendly products under 100 calories per portion, by 2025.

"Last year it was reported that major brands selling HFSS-compliant products saw an average increase of sales of 27% across British supermarkets," Vanessa adds, saying nutrition is becoming more of a concern as shoppers look for more 'positive' snacking options such as those high in fibre and minerals, or abundant with nuts and seeds. "Some brands are investing in alternatives to potato and wheat such as Taylor's Lentil Waves and Burt's Lentil Chips."

Snacking trends

Trade events are hotbeds for innovation and inspiration, and the organisers of one of the UK's biggest food and drink showcases – IFE – have a front row seat when it comes to spotting the 'next big thing'.

IFE event manager, Federico Dellafiore, says this year he saw snack brands continuing to invest in exciting free-from products, and experimenting with ingredients such as pea protein, chia seeds and natural bacteria.

"Plus, a number of brands were showcasing crisps that were popped not fried, focussing on reducing their fat content to create a healthier option."

Other than health claims, Federico sees sustainability as the trend to watch in snacks, adding that it remains at the top of the agenda for brands, "with even newer names like Soak'd Oats putting forward comprehensive carbon reduction plans and Net Zero roadmaps, and brands like Prodigy Snacks investing in B Corp certification and partnering with charities tackling plastic in oceans."

Another trend the IFE team noticed this year was elevated versions of timeless classics. "Brands such as Denmark's OK Snacks were showcasing Awfully Posh pork crackling and crunchy snacking cheese – taking pub snack classics and refining them with some tasty results," says Federico.

"As is often the case in the world of snacks, many international brands were also leading the way in new product innovation and exciting flavours for the UK market.

"Indian supplier, Makino, for example, showcased high protein Super Nachos Indian Chaat, and Corn Munch Red Chilli Chatka, and Canada's Dare Foods brought its Zesty Ranch and All Dressed flavours of veggie crisps. Hopefully this reflects a consumer desire to be more adventurous when it comes to snacking, seeing out unfamiliar flavours and brands."

Food innovation consultant Jennifer Earle's predictions for the direction of travel in snacking lead to dehydrated fruit and veg, legumes and Indian flavours or spicing.

"I personally love dehydrated or freeze-dried fruits as a snack, plus kale chips, and products made with legume flours," she says.

"Recently I've particularly enjoyed Czech-based company Luskeeto's handmade, baked lentil crackers which are still a similar fat percentage to crisps, but higher in protein and a bit more satiating."

Jennifer has also been snacking on newly launched chocolate-coated frozen raspberries from Froot Pops, and chocolate-covered freeze-dried





mango from Filipino company, Auro.

She's seeing "more legume and ancient grain flours being used instead of wheat, and more dried fruit instead of sugar", and "chilli and lime seems to be a big flavour combination that many brands have brought out, but also fermented ingredient flavours too, like miso and pickle."

Jennifer is excited about Indian-themed snacks in familiar taste profiles, like masala-flavoured crisps and crackers, "or Bombay mix launches or popped lotus seeds which have a healthier angle.

> "I've seen some interesting protein-rich, low-fat jerky launches of late, with both meat and meat-free options a health-forward route for brands pushing both at-home and on-the-go snacking benefits"
>
> **TOM GATEHOUSE**

I also think we'll see more filled or covered dates too." Tom thinks 'artisanal' and 'playful' are the ones to watch in snacking. And "keep an eye out too for a greater synergy between snack and street food, with a greater spotlight on authentic street food formats potentially leading (when applicable) to convenient, on-the-go snacking innovation."

In good taste

'Meaty' as a flavour is reigning supreme right now and leading the charge in the snacking market, says Tom, who is beginning to see more 'barbecue expressions' across the category, such as Korean or American.

Greg Smith, head of marketing at Taylor's Snacks, says they've been watching flavour and format trends very closely in the past year to ensure the company is aligned with changing consumer tastes in 2024.

"Insights suggest that a combination of sweet and spicy or sweet and salty snacks are primed to tantalise tastebuds," he says. "Hot honey and salted caramel are two flavours we're exploring for crisps and popcorn this year."

While Vanessa is seeing leanings towards spicier products, and world and exotic flavours...as well as a yearning for classic and traditional tastes.

It's 'old favourites' that are driving sales at Fairfields Farm, which has just expanded its range, launching a new Prawn Cocktail flavour. "We've been looking forward to launching these for a long time," says commercial director Tash Jones. "Robert, our co-founder, has always been a prawn cocktail fan, but there wasn't a call for it in the 'posh' side of the hand-cooked crisp market until recently."

Tash says she's seen a "huge trend for Millennials trying to get joy from nostalgia. It's definitely a significant trend within our core market".

The brand's newest flavour has been benchmarked across the whole industry to ensure it stands out, while also being (as is the rest of the range) vegan and gluten free.

"We wanted a flavour where you can definitely taste the prawns in it," Tash says. "A lot of them have a sharp vinegar taste, but these have almost a two-stage flavour punch, starting with a hit of vinegar that then rounds out with more of a Marie Rose creaminess."

Fairfields' bestsellers remain Salt & Vinegar and Lightly Salted, with Tash saying they'll always have a place in retail, no matter what weird and wonderful creations come up.

"But, I would say we are seeing a surge in those meaty flavours." Like Tom, Tash thinks this is where the snacking market is heading.

"Roast Rib of Beef does really well for us, and Bacon & Tomato is starting to take over. That reflects the market as a whole. There are definitely a lot more spice and meaty flavours."

STOCK CHECK

SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE 2024



PEANUT BUTTER & MILK CHOCOLATE DATES FOREST FEAST

Soft Deglet Nour dates smothered in smooth peanut butter and generously dunked in Belgian milk chocolate.

forestfeast.com



PRAWN COCKTAIL FAIRFIELDS FARM

New from the brand. The deliciously tangy, creamy flavour of a classic prawn cocktail in crisp form, made with the farm's own potatoes.

fairfieldsfarmcrisps.co.uk



HEREFORD HOP CHEESE & ONION TWO FARMERS CRISPS

The sustainable choice, made with the brand's own potatoes and sold in 100% home compostable packs. Flavoured with artisan cheese from Charles Martell & Sons, and Two Farmers' onions.

twofarmers.co.uk



ORGANIC JAPANESE BROWN RICE CRACKERS – BLACK PEPPER & TAMARI CLEARSPRING

A light and wholesome gluten-free snack, baked to perfection with black pepper and naturally aged tamari.

clearspring.co.uk



SPICY BARBECUE BURTS

A new, limited-edition flavour, bringing the smoky taste of barbecued, grilled meats to consumers in crisp form.

burtschips.com



WARM CUMIN & FENNEL MUNCHY SEEDS

A healthier on-the-go snack of spicy roasted pumpkin and sunflower seeds with warm cumin and fennel flavours.

munchyseeds.co.uk







ALL **DRESSED** UP

A drizzle of great-tasting oil, vinegar or dressing can make or break a dish. *Speciality Food* discovers the bottles consumers are reaching for right now

COMMENTATORS



DAWN KNUTTON
YAFFLE HOUSE



ANGUS FERGUSON
DEMIJOHN



GIANFRANCO PERRI
JUST GOURMET FOODS



MARIA DAWSON
CLEARSPRING

The impact food writers (and social media content creators) have on informing consumer tastes and buying patterns is undeniable. Delia Smith, Nigella Lawson, Jamie Oliver and Mary Berry have all been responsible for shopping frenzies for everything from Smash (dehydrated mashed potato) to cupcakes and pork shoulder.

A series of categories that have seen their stars rise in the last few years (especially since Covid times) having had their moment in the spotlight, include oils, vinegars and dressings.

When she published her best-selling book, Salt Acid Fat Heat in 2017, later followed by a smash hit Netflix series, Samin Nosrat changed the way a whole generation (particularly younger cooks) thinks about food. Her bold, confident approach to cooking, and indefatigable passion, caused ripples in both domestic and professional kitchens. Particularly her thoughts on acid. The way a squeeze of lemon juice, or a splash of the right type of vinegar can elevate and brighten even the most humble of dishes.

More recently vinegar and acid have come to the fore as The Glucose Goddess (biochemist and author Jessie Inchauspe) rocked the health, nutrition and diet world with her bestseller, The Glucose Revolution. Jessie has become a poster child for so-called 'glucose hacks', such as taking ACV (apple cider vinegar) before meals to reduce blood sugar spikes, leading to many hours of airtime, and soaring sales of vinegar. Jessie can be credited with helping to boost ACV's shelf appeal, with a whole new generation of functional drinks and vinegar products being marketed outside of the health food sector.

Another product that's been gaining traction amongst the health conscious, as they look to improve their diets, is EVOO (extra virgin olive oil), which has particularly been lauded by Professor Tim Spector for its apparent gut-friendly, anti-inflammatory properties, though the oil's renaissance in the UK has been scuppered somewhat by fluctuating and increasing olive oil prices, as the industry in the Mediterranean is hammered by the effects of flooding, draught and disease. Anecdotally, some retailers say, however, their customers aren't being driven away by rising costs, as they increasingly put their diet and health first.

The acid test

According to Fortune Business Insights, the global ACV market is projected to grow by 4.5% in the period from 2021 to 2028.

Dawn Knutton runs a small gourmet marshmallow and apple cider-based fruit vinegar business, Yaffle House, and says she's definitely seen growing interest from retailers and at the markets she attends.

"More people are aware of fruit vinegars and what they can use them for," she explains. "They're even coming up to me now saying things like 'you can put this in drinks can't you?' or 'I've heard about this on the radio'. There's a lot more experimentation going on, and a willingness to try new things."

Dawn started her business as an innovative way of using up blackberries when approached by a friend to take a stall at a local farmers' market. "Whenever I picked blackberries my husband would say 'could you make blackberry vinegar?'. I'd never heard of it, but he used to have it on pancakes or Yorkshire puddings for dessert."

Today, it's still the blackberry flavour that shoppers are most drawn to, for its familiar, traditional flavour. "It's really versatile," says Dawn, who adds that fruit vinegars are becoming more mainstream and are being used by customers in more ways than ever before. She takes her plum and ginger variety as an example. "Lots of people use this as a drink. I think they're looking for different things, more interesting things, to drink that aren't alcohol or regular soft drinks. There's so much choice available to them now, like drinking vinegars, and kombucha and water kefir."

The burgeoning understanding of what fruit vinegars are and the myriad ways they can bring a 'little something special' into the kitchen, is what's making them a winner, adds Dawn. "They can drink them, use them in dressings or on salads, and they can even be used in gravies (which taste amazing), or as a glaze for meats or sauce for steak."

Dawn gives direct customers and retailers recipe sheets to help inspire them. "And to show them all the potential the vinegars have. If you can explain all the ways they can be used (I even use them to make cocktails), it really helps."

Apple cider vinegar riding high on its health claims is giving sales a boost too. "People are listening to podcasts and seeing reports and pieces on television about it," says Dawn. "I'm not here to make health claims, but a lot of people are saying they use it for their joints and inflammation." This is often



a starting point from customers approaching Dawn, who steers them towards the culinary benefits of fruit vinegar.

Sous Chef founder Nicola Lando has a thing for Huilerie Beaujolaise fruit vinegars, which are taking off for the online foodie portal. "Pour a dash of any of their fruit juice vinegar over salad leaves or roasted vegetables, then a splash of good olive oil and a pinch of salt. I promise it rivals any more complex dressing you might make yourself." At the moment Nicola says she's keeping raspberry and quince vinegar to hand, but she's also excited about





mango, and calamansi citrus vinegars.

But, like Dawn, Demijohn founder Angus Fergusen says it's milder flavoured vinegars (rather than more exotic bottles) made with popular well-known fruits that land best with customers. Demijohn, which offers refillable bottles of oils, vinegars, spirits and more, says single flavour or ingredient varieties sell well, and that customers are particularly drawn to his products because they are crafted with real fruit, and no preservatives.

"Now, more than ever, customers are interested in ingredients listings for health or dietary reasons, as well as the story and provenance of a product," he explains.

Seasonal fruit vinegars have become mainstays of his business, from an elderflower vinegar, produced with flowers harvested from the hedgerows of Demijohn's Galloway farm, to raspberry vinegar, made with prime, plump Scottish berries.

Gianfranco Perri, founder of Just Gourmet Foods, agrees with Angus that its quality customers are looking for predominantly - especially when it comes to balsamic vinegar, which (when sourced from the right people, at the right ages) is far superior to mass-produced products, which tend to be thin and insipid, missing that rich, sweet caramelised taste of a traditional balsamico.

"We offer a range of balsamics which are suitable for a variety of uses, from great value, everyday condiments, to superb, aged vinegars which should be reserved for special dishes," he says.

Olive oils...and alternatives

Angus sells more than 70 handmade food and drink products on tap, and says extra virgin olive oil, British rapeseed oil and infused British rapeseed oil (alongside fruit vinegars and balsamics) make up around 50% of what rings through the till.

This is a sharp change from Demijohn's beginnings at its first high street outlet in Edinburgh, when sales were skewed (65%) towards alcohol. "Over the last 20 years our customers have definitely enjoyed more of our non-alcoholic products," he says. "The result of this is that purchasing decisions for oneself and when buying gifts, are more regularly heavily weighted towards quality, provenance, health and wellbeing. Our offering of oils, vinegars and dressings is a crucially important part of our range."

Consumers choosing oils for health (as well as flavour) is a pattern Clearspring managing director, Maria Dawson, has noticed occurring more frequently recently. She also says she's seeing consumers becoming more adventurous in the kitchen "inspired by the ever-growing number of global foodie-influencers, and instant access to virtually every kind of cuisine imaginable at the click of a button.

"This has led to more and more shoppers experimenting. They might have seen the use of walnut oil in French and Italian cooking, or coconut oil in Indian cuisine...or they are simply exploring simple ways to elevate the flavour in their everyday cooking."

Choosing to stock organic and cold-pressed oils delivers health benefits to customers, Maria continues, while allowing the products to "retain even more of their natural flavour compared to conventional oils, or those that are highly processed, often at high temperatures."

Independent and speciality retailers have a "fantastic opportunity" with alternative culinary oils, Maria says. "Supermarkets tend to focus on core category varieties such as olive, sunflower and rapeseed oils. By offering something unique, speciality retailers can give themselves a point of difference and give shoppers a reason to visit their store. Independent businesses can introduce a new oil to their shelves very quickly, with just one or two cases to gauge their core shoppers' interest before making it a permanent offering alongside their olive and sunflower oil category staples.

Suitable for heating up to 180C, Maria recommends coconut, avocado, hazelnut, sesame and toasted sesame oils as solid investments for retailers this year.

"Each oil has its own unique flavour characteristics," she says, adding that "avocado oil has a creamy texture, with a very mild fruit flavour. It lends itself particularly well to baking, but is also great for sauteeing and stir fries."

Those looking for something special should seek out pumpkin seed oil, Maria says. "It has a rich deep colour and velvety texture, with a distinct nutty flavour which works well with balsamic vinegar to create a sumptuous salad dressing."

It is also worth noting, "that with the shortage of European olives due to poor harvests, there has been a steep increase in the cost of olive oil." This is "driving a lot of shoppers to seek out and try alternative oils that are maybe more affordable, whilst still delivering on taste and quality."

Just Gourmet Foods founder, Gianfranco Perri, though, says the demand for high-quality extra virgin olive oil, is still there, despite its increasingly weighty price tag. "We are seeing growing interest in single varietal extra virgin olive oil," he reveals, saying he can only surmise that "authenticity still wins in a cash-strapped market and, when purse strings are tight, that there are still people who value quality over quantity."

Strong sales could also be, Gianfranco says, a reflection of consumers looking for more connection with their food, choosing products they can trace back to specific locations and individuals.

"Having personal relationships with our producers means that we see the love and expertise which, literally, gets poured into every bottle. Our producers create products



> "Independent businesses can introduce a new oil to their shelves very quickly, with just one or two cases to gauge their core shoppers' interest before making it a permanent offering alongside their olive and sunflower oil category staples"
>
> **MARIA DAWSON, CLEARSPRING**



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which are a fundamental reflection of themselves (they are 'the brand'), their history, and their relationship with a geographical area. This means they care deeply for how their produce is received by the end consumer."

What makes a really high-quality olive oil, Gianfranco adds, is when the experience of the product is put ahead of profit by the producer... something he regularly encounters.

"We stock a really fabulous organic range from Bio Orto, and are about to launch a range from Tenute Cristiano which will feature some more unusual varieties, while being very reflective of the 'terroir' of the Calabrian olive groves."

He is especially excited about the Mediterranean Herbs oil "which will be wonderful for finishing an array of summer dishes."

Muraglia is another brand going from strength to strength in the Just Gourmet Foods portfolio, with retailers (and consumers) loving the decorative ceramic bottles. The 'Fumo' smoked olive oil particularly "receives a lot of attention as it is a natural way to add that subtle flavour to all kinds of dishes, without having to use any of the artificial 'smoke' flavours which are found on the market."

What's trending right now?

In addition to ACV, fruit vinegars and extra virgin olive oil, Harper Fine Dining chef and director, Dean Harper says 'citrus' is the flavour profile to watch across the board.

"I've noticed a rise in unique combinations like citrus-infused vinaigrettes this year," he says, adding, "Creamy avocado dressings are also very popular right now, with honey mustard with a hint of truffle being another clear favourite as chefs, cafe owners and restaurants expand their offerings to cater to diverse palates."

Exciting combinations Dean has noticed include pairing fresh fruit (such as ripe peaches) with a balsamic and basil dressing to "strike the perfect balance between sweet and tangy", or presenting roasted vegetable bowls with tahini miso dressings.

He believes, like Maria, this is also the year that avocado oil will take off following a "surge of interest" due to its versatility across sweet and savoury dishes "not to mention its numerous health benefits."

Gianfranco has seen increased demand across the board, but especially for the 'Rainbow' range from Muraglia – tins and ceramic bottles containing robust, fruity Puglian extra virgin olive oil. And these eye-catchingly packaged options are being chosen outside the traditional gifting season as retailers realise they have "all-year-round customer interest".

"Bottles which look great in the home, as well as giving high-quality oil or vinegar, do appear to be appealing to a wider customer base," Gianfranco reflects. "Although the price point may be higher, it is offering a beautiful container which can be refilled and enjoyed for years to come."

Making the sale

Customers looking for quality and provenance from their oils, dressings and vinegars are more likely to visit a specialist retailer such as a deli, food hall or farm shop. But without guidance on the shop floor their 'mission' to upgrade their store cupboard could be thwarted. This is why, says Angus, it's imperative to offer tastings – which are often only limited to the 'sexier' offerings in store, such as cheese, alcohol and snacks.

"Allowing customers to taste a product prior to purchase is undoubtedly the best way to sell more," he says. "It's why we offer tastings of all of our products at all times in-store." However, "the product being offered needs to be of the best quality, and the salesperson offering the tasting must be knowledgeable about the benefits of using that product, and sensitive to a particular customer's personal likes and dislikes in order to be effective. We are all made differently, so the real skill is to quickly spot those likes and dislikes to steer a tasting in the right direction to best suit the customer."

If you have a cafe or restaurant on site, now's the time to assess where you can incorporate dressings, oils and vinegars into your menus, signposting back into the shop space. Inviting demonstrations from known local chefs who can inspire your customers to try, and experiment with both traditional and more unusual oils and vinegars, handing out recipe cards, and dishing up samples, is a very effective device to boosting interest too. What will you try that's new this summer?

> "More people are aware of fruit vinegars and what they can use them for"
>
> **DAWN KNUTTON, YAFFLE HOUSE**



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HOW TO SELL ‘SMELLY CHEESE’

Washing the rind of cheese can give it a rather distinctive aroma – that some customers might be put off by. How can cheesemongers get them on side?

Lush, velveteen, umami, and oozing. These are some of the most sought-after characteristics in cheese...surely? The only trouble is, many of these qualities relate to washed-rind cheese – and it really doesn't float everyone's boat. Particularly if they've tried something a bit pokey in the past.

So, how to win over the stinky cheese avoider?

For starters, have a decent selection. They should absolutely be key players in your counter, says Mark Kacary of The Norfolk Deli. "A rind washed cheese is a thing of beauty," he romanticises. "It has been lovingly washed and cared for over what is often a significant period. It is soft, gooey and unguinous."

To not stock them, favouring the same old same old as the supermarkets is "like missing out a member of the Beatles. You're missing out personally, but also so are your customers."

Morgan McGlynn Carr of Cheeses of Muswell Hill fervently agrees and says her cabinet is awash with so-called smelly cheeses. They are some of her bestsellers, offering unique aromas and flavours that add "depth and complexity to each bite".

"They also showcase the rich cultural heritage and traditions of cheesemaking, appealing to adventurous customers seeking bold taste experiences."

Her personal favourites include Epoisses, Munster and Taleggio. "Epoisses, with its velvety texture and pronounced aroma, exemplifies the epitome of washed-rind cheeses," Morgan says, dreamily. "Tallegio's buttery richness and tangy profile make it a versatile and crowd-winning choice. And Munster, steeped in history, offers a robust flavour with hints of earthiness."

Not wanting to overlook homegrown varieties, Morgan says she really enjoys Yarlington – a British cheese that's starting to become a real favourite in the shop. "It's washed in Tom Oliver's cider, which is made using Yarlington Mill apples and it boasts a creamy texture and subtly pungent aroma."

Taleggio is a firm choice for Mark too, who adds that Mrs Temples' Gurney Gold, made in his home county of Norfolk, is the "perfect alternative". Stinking Bishop and Epoisses are also 'up there' for Mark who says both have a reputation for being very smelly, but their 'bark is worse than their bite'. "Let's not forget cheeses such as an Ogleshield or Raclette. They're also rind washed but not to the same extent. A rind washed cheese is probably the best cheese to use wherever and whenever you want gooey, melted cheese, such as in a toastie."

How to store smelly cheeses

There is a misconception that stinky cheeses such as washed-rind varieties, will taint the flavour of other products in the counter. Mark says he thinks it's all a "work of fiction".

Unless of course "you were to leave a rind washed cheese unwrapped in standard room conditions on top of another cheese. At this point you are likely to have a problem. But we keep ours in the same counter as other cheeses, wrapped in clingfilm, in what is quite a cold environment – approximately 1-2C. Smelly cheeses become smelly when exposed to warmth. Keep them cold and you will control the smell."

Morgan says washed-rind cheese thrives in a cold, humid environment, stored on a clean surface to preserve its individual textures and flavours. "Regular monitoring and rotation help prevent excessive drying or moisture build up, ensuring freshness and optimal taste."

Convincing your customers to try washed-rind cheese

While luring customers from Cheddar to, perhaps, a gently bloomy, mushroomy Brie is often a winner, getting them to discover pastures new from the stinkier side of the counter can prove altogether more difficult.

The most obvious barrier is smell. "Therefore, go with a cheese that is not too smelly," to get the ball rolling, says Mark, who highlights Reblochon, Raclette and Ogleshield as the most obvious choices. "None of these smell bad, but they have a unique flavour reminiscent to cheese such as Stinking Bishop. Once you have tried those, look towards cheese like a St Helena, or a Norfolk Tawny, which is washed in a Norfolk brown ale. Or, some of my favourites at the moment are Rebel Nun or Renegade Monk – with Rebel Nun having a touch of blue in included in the mix."

Include washed-rind cheeses in your sampling, insists Morgan. With a little friendly coaxing, you may find more people than you'd expect are up for trying them. She offers two or three different sampling cheeses each weekend so customers can discover something new. Morgan has some tricks up her sleeve to make the offer even more enticing, pairing washed-rinds with crusty bread, fruits or nuts to balance their bold flavours. "We would then highlight the unique characteristics of each cheese, and share personal recommendations based on their favourites."

Suggesting pairings, and ways to make these cheeses more approachable for the novice is a good idea, says Mark who is "a sucker for a wholewheat cracker. It's the sweetness against the gooeyness of the cheese, and the way the crumb helps to cut through the cheese." Otherwise, he suggests advising customers to try them with a crisp apple, jacket potatoes, or in a toastie.

"Epoisses pairs well with honey or fig jam," adds Morgan, saying both of these will accentuate its richness. "Taleggio complements fruity red wines like Barbera. And Munster harmonises with bold flavours such as charcuterie and pickles, creating a dynamic mix of savoury and tangy elements."

> “Start customers off with a cheese that is not too smelly such as Reblochon or Ogleshield. None of these smell bad, but they have a unique flavour reminiscent to cheese such as Stinking Bishop”

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welovemanfood.com

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Snowdonia Cheese Co's award-winning truckles are renowned worldwide for their distinctive flavour profiles, and quality you can taste. The brand has recently undergone a sophisticated refresh, with new labelling paying homage to the cheese collection's home in North Wales. A standout must-have for any picnic.
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A warm growing year produced an exceptional harvest for this PDO English sparkling wine, made using only grapes from the winemaker's single estate vineyard in East Sussex. Crisp and elegant, with great length and balance, it has an aroma of biscuits, roasted nuts, oatmeal and apple, with fruity, almost apple crumble notes unfurling on the palate.
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Whether you're grilling, roasting or dipping, Cottage Delight's new Smoky Chipotle Barbecue Sauce is the ultimate companion for those who crave spicy kick. It's the ideal sauce to bring new flavours to the taste of grilled meats, burgers and more, making it the perfect addition to a summer barbecue or picnic table.
cottagedelight.co.uk

A day in the life of a cheese judge



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

Being involved with cheese is quite frankly awesome. My journey in cheese started many years ago when my mum made me the most delicious cheese and pickle toasted sandwiches. I loved that creamy and buttery taste alongside the sweet, sharp pickle with the melted butter on the toast.

This sandwich has remained a favourite of mine, but I can't ever quite replicate the brilliance of my mum's toastie artistry. The cheese my mum used was bought from the local shop and it was an Ayrshire Dunlop. This cheese is like Cheddar in make but somewhat milder as the curds retain more moisture, and the cheese is softer to the touch. It is a Scottish variety, created by Barbara Gilmour who brought the recipe from Ireland in the 1700s. As I grew up in Scotland it is of no surprise that this was a staple kept in my mother's larder.

The joy I have tasting cheese is off the scales. For me there is nothing quite like it. There are countless makes all offering myriad textures, smells, flavours and colours. Understanding the reasons why cheese looks and tastes as it does is such an immersive experience visually, physically, and emotionally. Hence my love of being a cheese judge is infinitive.

My first competition for 2024 was to judge at the British Cheese Awards. This was my second time as a judge with the BCA. My first experience was in 2011 in Cardiff. No2 Pound Street were invited to judge as we won the Best New Retailer 2011 – this was the very first time that I judged, and I was somewhat green. Thankfully I had some good tutors, especially the formidable Juliet Harbut whose extensive knowledge on all things cheese helped immensely.

This year the awards were held at The Bath & West Showground in Somerset. It was the perfect venue. I think a cheese competition in the South-West is so important especially as it has the highest proliferation of cheesemakers.

After our briefing for the first half of the day I was paired with Nigel Pooley. This gentleman had his nose insured for £5 million as a Cheddar grader. His journey in cheese began in 1963, and he is probably one of the finest Cheddar graders on the planet. What a fabulous experience to have been with him. We both agreed on two fabulous cheeses and placed our gold stickers. They turned out to be Montgomery's and Pitchfork Cheddar – no surprise there!

For the second half of the day, I was thrilled to join two legendary cheesemakers, James Montgomery, and Mary Quicke. Our task was to taste the blues that had been awarded gold in the first round. We ruminated, cogitated, and digested our thoughts. It was agreed that the mature Cashel Blue was just perfect, and we awarded it the top prize. Later this cheese was yet again judged to win not only category but reserve champion cheese.

Being able to tune your taste senses correctly is a skill that takes many years to master. Nigel Pooley, Mary Quicke and James Montgomery know so much and I was so lucky to have had such brilliant company to learn from. With the immense help from organisations such as the Academy of Cheese, the understanding of this food is becoming more accessible to all those willing to take the journey. Believe me it is a great journey to be on and one that has seen me literally travel the World.

There are many inspirational people to meet that will help guide you into the world of cheese. It is a journey that connects you not only to a food that is delicious but also helps you connect with the animals and the land that it come from.

> "Understanding the reasons why cheese looks and tastes as it does is such an immersive experience visually, physically and emotionally. Hence my love of being a cheese judge is infinitive"

New truckle range from traditional cheesemaker

Clawson Farms, best known for the production of Stilton, has brought to market a selection of innovative new wax truckles, drawing on its 100-year history in cheesemaking.

The dairy says it hopes the range will disrupt what is an increasingly competitive category by combining characterful branding with much-loved flavour combinations with a twist, drawing on both sweet and savoury tastes, and using its premium Cheddars, Red Leicesters and Wensleydales as a base.

The newcomers include Truffle Seeker (a truffle and sweet honey Cheddar represented on the pack by foraging pig Fred), and Dormouse's Delight (Wensleydale with cranberry, elderflower and orange marmalade, featuring mascot Dorothea on the labelling).

All truckles are in a 200g format, apart from Truffle Seeker, at 150g.

"Our research shows there is a real desire for unusual flavours and distinct branding for truckle cheeses, particularly in delis and farm shops," says managing director Bill Matthieson.

"We are bringing to the sector something original in terms of taste, and premium in terms of quality. Traditionally truckles have been bought for special occasions and gifts, but our insight shows that more people are now buying them as a treat for themselves."





Yorkshire dairy brings first organic cheese to market

Multi award-winning Yorkshire cheesemaker, Shepherds Purse, has joined forces with local business, Acorn Dairy, to produce its first organic cheese – Organic Yorkshire Blue.

The cheese has taken 12 months to develop, using milk from Acorn Dairy's herds, grazed on pastures in Yorkshire and the Durham Dales, and marks the beginning of Shepherds Purse's organic journey, with more products in the range likely to be available in an organic format in the future.

Yorkshire Blue is a mild, creamy cheese, first launched in 1995 by the Bell family, and has become the business's most popular variety, taking home industry accolades that include a gold at the World Cheese Awards.

Caroline Bell, joint managing director at Shepherds Purse, says, "We're thrilled to have officially launched the organic version of our popular Yorkshire Blue in collaboration with Acorn Dairy. We've been driven by a passion for artisan cheesemaking and health, which has gone hand-in-hand with a deep commitment to farming and sustainability ever since our mum, Judy Bell, founded Shepherds Purse 35 years ago."

Caroline Bell (nee Tweddle) operations manager at Acorn Dairy, adds, "Shepherds Purse collaborating to make a cheese with organic milk was discussed every time we met. It is more relevant and welcome than ever before, as we all try to reduce our impact and choose foods whose production builds biodiversity as well as environmental and human health...and if it happens to come in delicious cheese form, even better!"

Fledgling cheesemaker begins commercial production

Mat Lloyd never set out to be a cheesemaker. But since being gifted a £4.99 cheese kit four years ago, he hasn't looked back, and this month he's due to open his own, small commercial cheesemaking kitchen – The Rennet Works.

"I just really got quite involved with the process," Mat says of his journey. "I enjoyed the science of making cheese and began making quite an array of cheeses. Friends and family were really enjoying them, and they coerced me into entering into the International Cheese and Dairy Awards last year at Stafford. I did it on a bit of a whim, thinking 'they're never going to give me anything', and I came away with two awards!"

Mat won a Gold in the Best Semi-Soft Cheese with Flavours category for his Pepper Devil, and International Novice. His products, made with locally sourced Friesian and Jersey mix milk, will be sold only in independents, with the initial range including The Rennet Works' halloumi, the ICDA-winning Pepper Devil, and new cheese Templar.

Pepper Devil is a small, hung, semi-soft cheese, loosely based around a Swiss Belper Knoll. Matured for four to five weeks it is infused with garlic and encrusted with pepper.

While Templar has its roots in a German butterkase. "It like a buttery Gouda," explains Mat. "It's a butter washed curd that's lightly smoked over applewood and stencilled. It melts in the mouth, and is really good on grilled sandwiches. A very nice all-round cheese. The Germans call it a 'beer cheese' as they put it on the bars to snack on."

Find The Rennet Works on social media to discover more about Mat's cheeses or to enquire about small run or bespoke orders.



Group forms to champion artisan cheese producers

James and Nicola Grant of No2 Pound Street, and Sam and Amy Brice of Freshly Ground PR, have come together to launch The Real Cheese Project – with a mandate to champion artisanal British cheese, while encouraging shoppers to buy artisan-made over industrial.

The Real Cheese Project will work collaboratively across the speciality cheese world to help showcase the people and products that make it so special. Consumers will be able to join the project from September, with members receiving a box each month containing a cheese newspaper, and a wedge of cheese with a story to tell, supported by an online tasting session.

James says, "Britain loves its cheese, but most people aren't aware of what's on offer away from industrially produced staples that they're used to, and the good that small dairy farms are doing for our planet. There's a huge story to tell here, starting with healthy soil, but encompassing so many other pressing issues of today, including ethical dairy farming, sustainable land management, and technological advances to reduce emissions. We're here to tell these stories, with lots of incredible cheese to eat along the way."

Sam adds, "With over 1,000 artisan cheeses to choose from in Britain, we'd love to see more consumers seeking out something new from independent cheese shops. Real cheese brings a lot of joy as an end product, but there's so much that lies behind each clothbound truckle and delicate mould-ripened cheese, from handmade techniques and local milk, through to biodiverse farmland, farming families, local economies and our food heritage."

A donation of 5% of all profits will go into a Real Cheese support fund, to be donated to initiatives that protect, develop and progress the production of artisan cheese in Britain.

Beyond its own channels, The Real Cheese Project will campaign for artisan cheese through independent research, surveys and PR activities, including collaboration with other organisations in the industry.

Snowdonia Cheese Co unveils new look

Snowdonia Cheese Co, known for its bestselling range of truckle cheeses, from Black Bomber to Rock Star, has just unveiled a brand refresh – its first since 2018.



Significant investment has been ploughed into the project, which used extensive consumer research to understand how the cheesemaker could meet the needs of existing and fuuture customers.

The rebrand elevates the company's range, focusing on its core pillars of 'family', 'product', 'place' and 'people'.

In addition to shortening the brand name (from Snowdonia Cheese Company), a new logo elevates the significance of the 'place' behind the cheeses. A mountain range symbolises Snowdonia Cheese Co's deep roots in the North Wales landscape, windblown trees anchor the brand to the wilderness, and a traditional farmhouse embodies the beginning of the business, in a nod to the place where the cheese's founders (John and Richard) lived as fourth generation dairy farmers.

There is a new colour palette too. Slate Blue, in homage to the rich heritage of slate mining in North Wales, and Summit Gold, evoking the sunrises and sunsets that light up the region's dark skies.

Village Maid takes on production of Barkham Blue

The founders of Village Maid say they are very happy to be able to secure the continued future of Barkham Blue cheese, having taken on production from Two Hoots.

Anne and Andy Wigmore set up Village Maid nearly four decades ago, and have expanded the business considerably, starting with Pecorino-style Spenwood, and adding varieties such as Waterloo and the eponymous Wigmore.

Barkham Blue was, until recently, made close to Village Maid's Berkshire base by Anne's cousin Sandy Rose and husband Andy. "They set up in their garden too," says Anne, "inspired by what we were doing, so locally we had a really good combination between us. Their two children are now in their 30s and didn't want to take over the business, so they were going to sell it. We didn't want it to go out of the family so thought we'd just go for it and take it on ourselves!"

A dedicated area of Village Maid's cheesemaking premises has been sectioned off to make Barkham Blue, with the business recently granted permission to build a separate 'blue dairy', which they hope will be up-and-running before Christmas.

It's Anne's hope that they will ramp up production, and bring the cheese to a larger audience. "Barkham Blue has a huge following locally as well as nationally and we've been able to pick up some different customers who weren't able to get hold of it, which is great. There's a huge demand for the cheese."

When the blue dairy is established, Anne says she'd like to venture into making other blue cheeses in the future too. "I was always keen on Sandy making a blue sheep's milk cheese," she says. "I did get her to make some, and it was lovely, but she didn't carry on with it. That's something we might possibly make if we can get enough sheep's milk. We're struggling locally with that at the moment."

Made with Guernsey milk, Barkham Blue has, Anne says, "A terrific creamy texture and bright colour which is more enhanced with the summer milk. It's not too strong and we try not to make it too salty either. We've made over a dozen batches of it now…we're always tweaking and improving."





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MOOD BREWS

Herbal sleep remedies and mood-enhancing drinks are no longer just for health food stores says Sally-Jayne Wright

In the UK it's estimated that between 13 million and 15 million women are either entering menopause, or menopausal. Four out of five will seek help for symptoms but only a small percentage will take HRT.

As many explore alternative fixes for low mood, insomnia, and brain fog, so a plethora of bespoke drinks has appeared. One such example launched in May 2023, is Twinings Menopause Cool Moments tea, with lemon balm for anxiety and insomnia, and sage for brain fog. A bestseller at Holland and Barrett, it's also at Waitrose, Sainsbury's and Tesco.

Menopausal women aren't alone in seeking help for low mood, insomnia and poor concentration, are they?

No. About one in three adults in the West experience sleep problems weekly or more (NICE) which makes them feel tired and less effective at work.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE CURRENT MOOD-BOOSTING DRINKS TREND?

- Consumers consider mental health alongside diet and exercise in their personal health management (Mintel)
- Greater openness about menopause after celebrity-fronted #MenopauseRevolution campaigns
- Awareness that coffee and sugar lift mood temporarily but cause insomnia and energy dips

WHAT PROMISES DO THESE MOOD DRINKS MAKE?

Drinks entrepreneurs tend to have a flavour for each desired mental state, from calm, to alertness.

CAN YOU GIVE US AN EXAMPLE?

Made in Germany, the Rokit range of drinks (in cans and Nespresso machine-compatible pods) includes a Sweet Dreams decaf coffee infused with passion flower and valerian 'to promote a good night's sleep'. There are also two cold brew coffees: Mind Boost with added B vitamins for enhanced mental performance, and Energy Uplift with Guarana and Taurine to help reduce fatigue.

LET'S START WITH BETTER SLEEP. WHOSE DRINKS DO YOU LIKE?

We like drinks backed by science and there's clinical research linking magnesium to better sleep. At IFE 2024, we discovered a nutritional supplement company called Better You, which specialises in Vitamin D and magnesium. At the end of 2023, it made its first move into food and drink with non-carbonated Magnesium Water. Each can contains half your recommended daily allowance of magnesium, and there are three variants including one called Hydrate aimed at poor sleepers.

WHAT ABOUT DRINKS TO ELEVATE MOOD? CAN CBD DRINKS GIVE OUR CUSTOMERS A HIGH?

No. They might think so from the sexy, illicit-sounding product names and psychedelic packaging, but the psychoactive THC has been extracted.

SO WHAT DO CBD DRINKS DO?

Allegedly, they help to improve mental wellbeing. Eoin Keenan, CEO of the UK's fastest-growing CBD drinks brand, Good Rays, says you need at least 25mg of CBD to derive any benefit. Good Rays offers a market leading 30mg.

WHY IS THIS AMOUNT SIGNIFICANT?

In October 2023, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) lowered the recommended daily maximum dosage of CBD from 70mg to 10mg. Most CBD drinks contain more than 10mg. It is legal to sell them just as it's legal to sell strong alcohol and cream cakes.

If you prefer to play it safe, Intune's Pomegranate & Ginger sparkling, canned CBD drink fits the bill. Women's Health reported that 'it has the zing you need for a pick-me-up, while also containing 10mg of CBD for relaxation and focus.' Equally important, in our view, it earned itself one Great Taste Award star.

ARE CBD DRINKS STILL CLASSED AS NOVEL FOODS?

Yes, as are all CBD edibles. Eoin Keenan, says, "The benefit of the Novel Food (approval) process is that the FSA have been able to remove products that do not meet the required standards. This has cleaned up the CBD landscape and helped to build trust with consumers." Incidentally, you are still not allowed to promote CBD drinks on Instagram, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter).

WHICH DRINKS CAN WE STOCK THAT BOOST MENTAL ALERTNESS?

Look for 'shroom' coffees containing lion's mane, an adaptogen clinically proven to improve brain function and productivity. Or turn to the Better You range. Its Magnesium Water, Focus variant, with blueberry and mint flavour, is our favourite of the brand's beverages.

YOU NEED AT LEAST 25MG OF CBD TO DERIVE ANY BENEFIT

GOOD RAYS

GOT ANYTHING SPECIFICALLY FOR MENOPAUSE?

Could you put an iced menopause tea on the café menu? D'Amazonia and Hot Tea Mama are two brands aimed at this market. Both are based on natural herbs.

HOW CAN WE USE THE TREND TO PUT OUR ACCOUNTANTS IN A BETTER FRAME OF MIND?

- Mention mood-enhancing benefits in menu copy, for example, say that the L-theanine in tea raises serotonin and dopamine
- Know your customer. People over 65 are less likely to buy functional drinks (Mintel research in the US)

WILL THE TREND LAST?

There is a gap between actual consumption and interest in consuming; Mintel suggests that's because functional drinks tend to be expensive and household budgets are stretched (Mintel December 2023). Yet, new products draw customers to the shelves. Fine food retailers may want to tread carefully. Show you're aware of the mood-boosting trend but don't stock anything too woo-woo.

> "(The) holistic health and wellness approach has inspired consumers to seek products that can improve mood and boost brain health, as well as those with emerging functional ingredients"
>
> **(MINTEL GLOBAL FOOD AND DRINK TRENDS FOR 2030)**



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WHAT'S TRENDING IN 2024?

Our special report dives into the flavours, products and innovations that are hitting the mark with consumers this year





Welcome to Trendsetters 2024. At *Speciality Food* we're constantly taking the pulse of the industry, speaking with insiders, experts and forecasters, to ensure we deliver the very latest insight, enabling you to make effective buying decisions.

Through networking, and collaborating with wholesalers, brands and the UK's leading speciality food and drink events, we're always there for the 'inside scoop'. In this dedicated section, we reveal some of the biggest trends we think you should be actively investing in this year. Categories that have seen phenomenal growth and activity in the last 12 months.

We advise how to make these trends work for you in a speciality food setting, and throw a spotlight on exciting new products. We hope you'll find the following pages a useful tool as you navigate buying for the summer and autumn seasons and beyond.

Before you dive into the main event, I thought I'd give my own, personal thoughts on what's trending in fine food, beyond the 'big hitters' we uncover in this section, based on what I've seen at shows, through conversations with analysts, and interviews with specialists.

CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS | EDITOR (MATERNITY COVER)



GUT-FRIENDLY FOOD

We are obsessed with the gut revolution in the UK. I've never heard so many people talking about their fibre intake, internal flora, and good and bad bacteria. What was a small category, led largely by single shot yoghurt-type drinks, has become completely saturated in the wake of research into the impact of our food and drink choices on our gut health. From live cultured drinks, to added-fibre chocolate and cereal bars, snacks and pastas, this trend is everywhere, and it's not going anywhere soon.

TRUCKLE CHEESES

British shoppers love a truckle. And there has been some exciting NPD in the category from both new and established brands. The appeal of these cheeses, I think, is in their 'grab and go' nature, shelf life, and the broad range of flavours available. Sampling, too, (which is part of the truckle cheese culture) really helps retailers to grab the attention of shoppers. Bestsellers include mature Cheddar, smoked cheese and those infused with truffle.

HOT SAUCE

The British palate is getting braver. Hot sauces were, 10 years ago, usually reserved for 'chilli heads' - folk who get their kicks from journeying up the Scoville Scale. Today, though, they've burst into the mainstream, and the key to quality is flavour, not mouth-burning, furious heat. Consumers want to experience an authentic taste of the hot sauce traditions of the Caribbean particularly, and to be able to pick out the fruitiness of the chilli varieties used.

HOT HONEY

A huge favourite in our house, hot honey has probably soared in popularity because if its use across a mixture of cuisines, from Asian hot wings and K-dogs, to American chicken tenders, ribs and barbecues. It's a very versatile ingredient, working as a marinade, in dressings, as a table sauce, and dashed into stews, casseroles, soups and stir fries.

READY MEALS

Ready meals have certainly had a 'glow up', particularly since the pandemic, when more and more of us relied on them. A whole new generation of makers has blossomed in this category, using traditional cooking methods, and wholesome, real ingredients to make dishes that taste just like homemade. Farm shops I've spoken to report they've had to increase freezer space due to the popularity of these options. Bestsellers include lasagne and curries.

NEW WAVE SODAS AND MOCKTAILS

Sodas are everywhere at the moment. But they're not the sugar-laden kind we grew up on. Spawned from the need to innovate following the introduction of HFSS regulations, these drinks are lower in sugar, and often free from sweeteners. Gut-friendly varieties are worth a look, as are the larger format bottles of low sugar, alcohol-free mocktails – ideal for the growing number of people eschewing alcohol and looking for alternatives. Tropical and citrus flavours seem most popular, alongside booze-free takes on classic cocktail combinations.

PLANT AND PULSE-BASED SNACKS

These were everywhere at IFE in London this year. Again, innovation here has been driven by HFSS regulations, as well as a general consumers' desire to be more mindful and healthful when they reach for a snack. We've tried cauliflower crisps, roasted beef brisket-flavoured broad beans, and wholegrain mini rice crackers warmed up with Asian spices. Whole foods and processing matter to the modern shopper, so nut, grain and pulse-based snacks that are as close as possible to their natural state, will appeal.

KOMBUCHA

What was, perhaps, one bottle propped up next to lemonade and coke on the soft drink aisle, has become big business in the UK, and there are new kombucha brands being launched left, right and centre. Not all kombucha is the good stuff, so don't be taken in by branding and gimmicks. The acidity of this drink can put some people off. It is essential to taste, taste, taste and choose your stock for flavour first, above any health claims. Start your customers with a milder variety to get their palates used to it, before venturing into the funkier kinds.

BOTANICAL RUM

This is a fairly new way of branding rum that's catching on. Inspired by the successful marketing of gin in the last decade or so, makers are appealing to a more diverse range of drinkers by being a bit more 'blousy' with their label design, and highlighting the botanicals that bring a touch of nuance to their products. Interestingly, it's British makers that are driving this trend forward.

MOOD-ENHANCING FOOD

From menopause-friendly teas, to CBD drinks for anxiety, and mushroom powders crafted to lift the spirits. The value to consumers of mood-boosting foods cannot be underestimated.

DECAF HOT DRINKS

More and more tea and coffee blenders are improving and increasing their decaf ranges as consumers show a desire to slow their caffeine intake – particularly in the afternoon or evening. There are some very good coffee alternatives coming to market, including some made with chicory, and real attention is being paid to ensuring flavour profiles of decaf products match that of their caffeine-loaded counterparts. When sourcing decaf coffee look for types made using natural decaffeination methods, such as Swiss Water.

RTD COCKTAILS

Shake (or not) pour, garnish. It's never been easier to recreate that bar cocktail experience in a home setting. Whole sections of the multiples are now dedicated to this category, with consumers able to buy both low ABV and bar strength varieties. Eye-catching packaging is a buying factor (cans that will impress guests), as is the use of premium spirits, and recipes that replicate classic cocktails perfectly. At the moment big sellers include the Old Fashioned, Pina Colada, Negroni, and Paloma.

WHY MEXICAN FOOD IS THE TREND TO WATCH IN 2024

Mexican food and drink have taken off in a big way in the UK... and consumer appetite only looks to be growing

Mexican cuisine has been bubbling under the radar for years in the UK. With numerous trend-watchers citing its fiesta of flavours as a must-stock for 2024.

"Mexican food is one of only four cuisines that have been declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity from UNESCO," Eduardo Gomez, sales director at Mexgrocer, an importer and distributor of authentic Mexican food, tells *Speciality Food*.

Traditional Mexican food, UNESCO says, is founded on corn, beans and chilli, as well as unique farming methods, cooking processes and utensils, like grinding stones and stone mortars. The country is also home to native ingredients, such as varieties of tomatoes, squashes, avocados, cocoa and vanilla, that "augment the basic staples".

What's more, Mexico is one of the top five most visited countries in the world, attracting people from all over the planet, "and once you've tried the real, authentic food, there is no way back," Eduardo says.

WHY IS THE TREND RISING?

Why is there a sudden buzz around all things Mexican? According to Bidfood, although many Brits are familiar with Mexican cuisine in its TexMex form – with nachos and burritos featuring on many a menu – it's the authentic experience that consumers in the UK are now after.

"Mexican cuisine has a much greater breadth and depth of food culture to discover than the handful of recipes we are most familiar with," the wholesaler says.

Indeed, 44% of Brits have already tried Mexican food, says Bidfood, and the cuisine has been around in the UK for decades. "Café Pacifico claims to have been first on the scene in London, having opened in 1982," says Heather Morris of SH Foodie, which supports food and drink brands with development. "In my own Bristol neighbourhood, Casa Mexicana (opened in 1986) has been serving up Mexican favourites from the same address ever since."

Another reason for the change in heart is the sheer adaptability of Mexican cuisine. With varied food options and spice levels, it can shift to suit most food preferences, including both meat and non-meat eaters, and young and old alike. "It's a bit more exciting, but so accessible," Heather says.

Eduardo adds that the growth of the Mexican restaurant scene in the UK has also been instrumental. Restaurants and bars like KOL, Hacha, Doña and Cavita have appeared in London, for example. This is "creating brand awareness and better reputation of Mexican food in the UK," he says.

THE TOP MEXICAN FOODS TO STOCK

Retailers should be quick to jump on the Mexican bandwagon, as there are plenty of opportunities to explore.

Start by getting the basics right. For Mexgrocer, bestsellers right now include speciality dried chillies, like chipotle and ancho, as well as corn soft tortillas, which also happen to be gluten free, and green and red salsas.

For those who are ready to look beyond familiar formats, Mexican food offers countless options. "As well as the well-known fajitas, enchiladas, quesadillas and chilli con carne, newer recipes making headway include birria, a spicy smoky hearty stew; tamales, a tasty street food made from corn dough with a multitude of fillings and steamed in a corn husk or banana leaf; and corn elotes (corn cobs smothered in creamy/spicy sauce with chilli and Cotija cheese," Heather says.

Even a taco or burrito can be dressed up with authentic mole sauce and freshly made salsa or a new filling, like tacos al pastor, made with marinated pork, which is a national dish in Mexico.

Authentic Mexican dishes are often made with fresh ingredients, including many that fine food shops will already stock – from chicken, fish and seafood to pinto beans, coriander, chilli and lime.

MEXICAN TIPPLES

On the drinks front, tequila and mezcal, spirits made from the country's agave plant, have seen a spike in popularity in the UK – and globally. Now, the market is favouring premium products: by 2026, drinks analysts at IWSR say super-premium-plus tequilas are forecast to account for 40% of the category's global volume, up from 13% as recently as 2016.

Eduardo has long been banging the drum for authentic tequila and mezcal in Britain, having founded the first ever Tequila and Mezcal Fest in the UK, which is now the largest festival of Mexican spirits in Europe.

"Mexican alcoholic drinks are ever increasing in popularity," Heather says. "Premium tequila and mezcal sales continue to grow as consumers become more aware of their quality. The rise in cocktail culture has also added to the sales increase, with the Margarita being the most popular according to Google." There are numerous brands fitting into this trend, such as El Rayo Tequila, Tequila Enemigo, Mirror Margarita and more.

"Interest in Mexican alcoholic drinks is extending to others, including sotol, which unlike tequila and mezcal is made from the sotol plant from the Chihuahuan desert," Heather adds. Examples that are available in the UK include La Higuera Wheeleri Sotol and Nocheluna Sotol.

Mexican soft drinks also pose an interesting stocking idea for retailers who want to promote the 'authentic Mexican experience'. "Tepache, a delicious, refreshing drink which is made from fermented pineapple peels is small but growing, and I forecast as one to watch," Heather says. "It fits in so well with the interest in all things fermented.

"Hibiscus flavoured drinks are another one to watch; it's unique sweet but earthy taste combines so well with many fruits, bringing another dimension to sodas," she says. From mixers, like Belvoir Farm's Floral Fizz Botanical Mixer, to health-focused drinks like Pomegranate & Hibiscus Kefir Water from Agua de Madre or simple Hibiscus Lemonade from Sipp'd, hibiscus drinks are already hitting the UK market.



BRITS' FAVOURITE MEXICAN FOOD TO MAKE AT HOME

- *Chilli con carne*
- *Burritos*
- *Nachos*
- *Salsa*
- *Fajitas*
- *Guacamole*

STOCK CHECK



TEX MEX SPICE BLEND SPICE KITCHEN

A feisty blend of chilli, garlic and oregano, with a hint of cumin. Suitable for use in many Mexican dishes.

spicekitchenuk.com



TORTILLA CHIPS CAPSICANA

Made with just three ingredients, using a traditional Mexican method, before being cut, flash-fried and lightly salted. Great on their own, or with a dip.

capsicana.co.uk



EL YUCATECI HABANERO GREEN MEXGROCER

A fiery hot sauce made with fresh green habareno peppers. A staple in authentic Mexican cuisine.

mexgrocer.co.uk



CHIPOTLE SALSA SALSA STORIES

A complex, layered salsa, with coriander, lime and smoky overtones of chipotle chilli. A delicious way to enhance any meal.

salsastories.co.uk



BLUE TEQUILA BUTTERFLY CANNON

A beautiful, colour-changing tequila with notes of clementine and prickly pear, and a finish of strawberry, watermelon, fig and banana.

butterflycannontequila.com



WHITE CORN TORTILLAS MASA TORTILLAS

Gluten-free, soft corn tortillas, made fresh at Masa's UK tortilleria three times a week. At 13cms in size, they are ideal for tacos, taquitos, quesadillas and more.

masa-tortillas.co.uk

SUPER-PREMIUM-PLUS TEQUILAS ARE FORECAST TO ACCOUNT FOR **50%** OF THE CATEGORY'S GLOBAL VOLUME, UP FROM **13%** IN **2016**

IWSR



HOW TO SELL THE MEXICAN TREND IN-STORE

If Mexican cuisine piques your interest, Eduardo has one piece of advice: stock authentic Mexican food. "Retailers must have a better variety of authentic Mexican food," he says. "Sadly, they all have the same two brands, which are Tex-Mex rather than authentic Mexican food."

This could include stocking products that use genuine Mexican ingredients, or creating new dishes for your cafe or restaurant, such as slow-cooked carnitas, tamales or corn elotes. Even burritos and tacos can be spiced up a notch with authentic mole sauce or freshly made salsa. Mexican cuisine also lends itself well to breakfast or brunch options, like huevos rancheros or chilaquiles.

THE UK TORTILLA MARKET IS PREDICTED TO GROW AT A CAGR OF **5.22%** BETWEEN **2021** AND **2028**

RESEARCH AND MARKET

Another way to boost sales is to show off the versatility of Mexican cuisine, by giving a nod to the flexibility of formats available and meat, dairy and/or gluten-free options. Using fresh ingredients like chipotle, paprika, coriander, avocado, beans and sweat potato, a variety of dishes can be created. There is no doubt that Mexican food will continue to thrive in 2024 – the only question is how independent retailers will introduce their customers to this exciting, authentic cuisine.

HOT TO STOCK

Speciality Mexican chillies, chipotle sauce, authentic tortilla chips, mesa harina flour, corn flour tortillas, fresh salsas, fresh guacamole, fruity hot sauces.





Salsa Macha
CHILI MAVEN

Salsa macha is Mexico's best kept secret: a condiment made with chillies, seeds, nuts, and garlic infused in oil to preserve the taste. It's crafted with clean ingredients that blend together to give you complex, developing flavours. A spoonful of salsa macha adds a warming spice to your food, without being overpowering. Chili Maven's salsa macha is made in Mexico using only home-grown Mexican chillies, and is available in two varieties: Mild & Smoky and Spicy & Nutty. Use it instead of a hot sauce to drizzle over pizza or stir it into pasta for an instant flavour boost.
chilimaven.com/





El Yucateco
MEXGROCER

Starting as a humble family business, El Yucateco carved its niche by mastering the art of homemade habanero chilli sauces straight from the Yucatan Peninsula. Now, it stands as a titan of taste in Mexican cuisine, offering a dynamic line-up of hot sauces, condiments, and traditional drinks that capture the vibrant spirit of Mexico. These bold, fiery creations are a must-have for any food lovers passionate about authentic flavours. Explore the deep culinary traditions of El Yucateco, available at mexgrocer.co.uk, and infuse your cooking with genuine Mexican heat.
mexgrocer.co.uk

La Costena
MEXGROCER

La Costeña, Mexico's premier grocery brand, has been a staple in kitchens since its humble beginnings selling jalapeño chilies in vinegar in 1923. Over the decades, it has expanded its product range to include a vibrant selection of pantry essentials. Today, La Costeña offers an extensive array of products, from rich, flavourful salsas, to hearty canned and refried beans, and versatile tomatillos. La Costeña delivers authentic Mexican flavours, embodying quality and tradition with each product. This makes it an essential addition to any kitchen, encapsulating the essence of Mexican culinary heritage in every bite!
mexgrocer.co.uk





FUNCTIONAL FOOD AND DRINK

The Covid pandemic forced people around the world to be more mindful of their health – and that starts with diet



Once the stable of specialist health stores and online wholesalers, a raft of new wellness food and drink products have launched into mainstream retailers in the last two years.

They've emerged alongside a new kind of consumer. A consumer hungry for nutritional, healthful, innovative alternatives that will enhance their energy levels, boost concentration, level their mood, heal their gut, or help them pack in their daily fibre and vitamins.

What your customers are looking for...

GUT-FRIENDLY DRINKS

Gut-friendly is one of the key buzz phrases we're seeing bridge both food and drink. There's been a lot of 'noise' around the world about the importance of nurturing the delicate bacteria in our gut, which in turn can make an impact on the immune system and mental health. Kombucha is a good place to start for retailers wanting to step into the food/wellness field. They vary in acidity, and some are more palatable than others so try a few with customers before committing to a brand. There are dozens of new gut-friendly soda brands now on the market, fitting neatly into the HFSS-friendly category too. And don't discount the gut-friendly 'magic' of vegetables, pulses and grains, which can be signposted as such in store.

ADAPTOGENS

There are two main players in the world of adaptogens. CBD and functional mushrooms. CBD has been making itself seen on supermarket and speciality shelves for a few years now, claiming to have a calming, mood-boosting effect. But it's being a little outshone at the moment by the public craze for mushrooms, which are being added to drinks, teas and food supplements, promising to help with everything from focusing to mellowing the mind.

Be it shiitake, maitake or turkey tail, there's a lot to talk about in this sector, which looks set to grow further. As ever, do your research, only choose high quality products, and don't make any health claims personally.

ACV

Apple cider vinegar is being touted as a 'superfood'. Its 'power' some say, means it can help reduce sugar spikes if a small amount is taken in water before a meal. It is also purported to support the immune system and gut. Not everyone will be keen on drinking vinegar, but some new wave vinegar-infused drinks have hit the soft drinks sector, and these could be worth trying in store. If you're stocking ACV, you'll have the best success going for organic varieties, and those that contain 'the Mother'.

FIBRE-RICH

Brits aren't getting enough fibre in their diets, and more and more products are boasting fibre-rich claims on their packaging in a bid to help consumers up their intake. From cereal and fruit bars, to savoury snacks, there are plenty of options here. A high fibre product is considered to have 6g of fibre per 100g. Beyond the snacking section, signpost customers to attractive jars and cans of pulses and beans, which have become quite a hit recently, and to pastas made with high fibre grains.

VITAMIN-ADDED

Probably one of the oldest wellness claims in the food and drink world. We're back to our busy pre-Covid lives, meaning many of us are rushing around chasing after kids, or meeting deadlines. Being able to inject a boost of vitamins into our system quickly, on the go, is therefore very appealing. As well as Vitamin C, there's an interest in magnesium (particularly for women), potassium (useful for sportspeople), B Vitamins (to help boost energy levels), and Vitamin D-enhanced products during the low light winter months.

FERMENTED

From kimchi to sauerkraut, yoghurt, tempeh and even cheese, there's a growing demand for food that nourishes us from the inside out, feeding our 'good bacteria' and more and more producers are investing in this sector, both in the chiller and ambient aisles.



FREQUENCY AND RATE OF SALE OF TRADITIONAL SOFT DRINKS IS ON THE DECLINE – ABOUT **12%** IN THE LAST **12** MONTHS. FUNCTIONAL DRINKS ARE ON THE RISE AND TAKING THEIR PLACE

EMMA THACKRAY

Energy Bar
CLIF BAR



The CLIF BAR Energy Bar (68g) first launched in the US in 1992 and has since become the number one energy bar in the US. Each bar contains a delicious blend of plant-based protein, fat, and carbohydrates, providing 9 to 11g of protein. CLIF BAR offers nutrition you can feel good about, with real food and simple ingredients. It's a clear choice for those seeking a protein and carbohydrate-rich snack for energy and endurance, as well as a healthier, nutritionally complete option.

worldofsweets.co.uk



S-Nap Shot Functional Drink
S-NAP SHOT

S-Nap Shot is the first all-natural functional drink made with ginseng, spirulina, amino acids, pineapple, apple, and kiwi, designed by a Swiss pharmacist and produced by Magnoglia SARL It's formulated to enhance concentration and reduce mental stress. Whether you're looking to tackle a challenging day at work or need an extra boost for your studies, S-Nap Shot provides sustained mental energy with its unique blend of natural ingredients. Experience improved focus and a sharper mind with S-Nap Shot - your daily partner in achieving a more productive and mentally active lifestyle.

foodalllab.co.uk



THE GLOBAL FUNCTIONAL MUSHROOM CATEGORY IS PREDICTED TO RISE FROM **$24.9** BILLION IN **2022** TO **$47.2** BILLION IN **2028**

HOLLAND & BARRETT WELLNESS TRENDS REPORT

2024 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



WATER ALMIGHTY

Sparkling water in an aluminium bottle, with seven added minerals (20% of your daily requirements) and electrolytes.

gunnadrinks.com



FHIRST

A tasty 'living soda' in a tart, zingy lemon and lime flavour, with added plant fibres and living cultures to treat the gut.

fhirst.com



ORGANIC CHICKPEA ORZO

Meets the increased demand for high-protein function food options. A gluten-free pasta suitable for use in salads, casseroles and stews and more.

profusionorganic.co.uk

FLAVOURS OF THE FUTURE

We delve into the flavour profiles setting consumers imaginations and taste buds alight in 2024

Keeping up with the 'next big thing' in food and drink is an endless job. Global travel and social media mean consumers have access to, and want to explore, new flavours, combinations and innovations constantly.
So, what are the 'tastes' they're reaching out for right now?

FLAVOURS LESS TRAVELLED

According to Bidfood's 2024 report, consumers are very enticed by authentic and traditional world cuisine, as they try to get closer to the 'real thing'. In fact, 56% said they would pay more for a dish if they perceived it as authentic. They're especially interested in Mexican, Eastern European and Caribbean food.

SWEET AND SPICY

'Swicy' is growing rapidly across multiple categories, from condiments to snacking. Hot honey, especially, is considered the 'one to watch', with shoppers choosing it to bring extra life to everything from noodle bowls to salads and sandwiches.

NEW WAVE PLANT-BASED

In 2023 some products aimed at the vegan and vegetarian market disappeared from shelves as companies failed to pivot and respond to increasing consumer demand for cleaner ingredients decks, and less processing. The industry is now responding with products that put real food first. Whole Foods Market says, "We're seeing new and emerging protein-forward products with mushrooms, walnuts, tempeh and legumes in place of complex meat alternatives." We sampled some very interesting vegan products at 2024's IFE in London, including 'meaty' shiitake mushroom stems from Australian brand Fable Food Co.

2024 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



BARON JERK SEASONING SOUS CHEF

A classic Caribbean seasoning to be used as a wet marinade. Made in St Lucia with predominantly Caribbean-grown ingredients, from hot peppers to spices.

souschef.co.uk



FILIPINO BANANA KETCHUP RONIB'S KITCHEN

A tangy, sweet, slightly spicy Filipino-style ketchup, made with real fresh bananas. Unique and very moreish.

ronibkitchen.co.uk



SRIRACHA HOT HONEY WILDERBEE

One of the IT ingredients of 2024, tapping into the 'swicy' trend. Ethical, organic wildflower honey is infused with Scotch Bonnet chillies and traditionally fermented sriracha.

wilderkitchenfood.com



THE GLOBAL INSTANT NOODLES MARKET IS PROJECTED TO GROW BY **6.12%** BY **2032**

FORTUNE BUSINESS INSIGHTS

ON THE **UP**

- *Sweet and spicy flavour profiles*
- *Hot honey*
- *Truffle*
- *Caribbean sauces and condiments*
- *Mexican sauces and condiments*
- *Eastern European ingredients*
- *Premium-flavoured ice cream and gelato*
- *British fusion food*
- *New wave plant-based food*

Baileys Treats
ANTHON BERG



Brand new for this year is a collaboration between Anthon Berg and Baileys cream liqueur. Through teaming up, Baileys, the UK's leading cream liqueur and Anthon Berg, which has a 140-year stronghold in marzipan production, have created a luxurious confectionery treat. The marzipan round is covered in Anthon Berg milk chocolate with a swirl of dark chocolate as decoration and the taste of Baileys cream liqueur. The dual branded gift boxes include seven individually wrapped pieces.

worldofsweets.co.uk

Organic Kimchi
SUMA



Kimchi - Korea's fiery, funky answer to sauerkraut. Take some cabbage, slice it up, and give it a good ol' massage with salt to draw out excess water and make it tender. Chuck in garlic, ginger, and Korean chili flakes, maybe a splash of tamari for an extra umami kick. Kimchi's secret lies in its fermentation magic. Those friendly bacteria get to work, transforming the humble cabbage into a tangy, spicy masterpiece. It's crunchy, fiery and downright addictive. Suma's chilled kimchi is top quality: organic, vegan, unpasteurised and traditionally made here in the UK. Perfected for the fermented foods trend.

suma.coop/wholesale

Vinaigrettes and dressings
MARY BERRY'S DRESSINGS



Mary Berry's Dressings has added two new dressings to its popular range - a Honey & Apple Cider Vinaigrette and a Sticky Ginger & Chilli Dressing. The delicious Mary Berry's Honey & Apple Cider Vinaigrette (235ml) has a perfectly balanced sweet and sharp flavour profile and taps into the growing consumer popularity of apple cider vinegar. Mary Berry's Sticky Ginger & Chilli Dressing (235ml) is perfect to dress salad leaves or as a marinade and dip for Asian-inspired dishes that continue to grow in popularity.

rhamaronline.com

Milk & Dark Milk Chocolate Bars
FIRETREE CHOCOLATE



Introducing Firetree's new chocolate bars: 40% cocoa Solomon Islands Milk Chocolate and 50% cocoa Philippines, Mindanao Island Dark Milk Chocolate.
Using directly sourced cocoa grown in the rich soils of remote volcanic islands, these new bars are created as the perfect introduction to the rich, complex taste notes of Firetree's bean-to-bar chocolate. The new 70g bars are joined by a 40% milk Hot Chocolate and exquisite Chocolate Thins.

firetreechocolate.com

2024 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



SEA SALT & BLACK PEPPER ROASTED LENTILS
NUDIE

Packed full of fibre and protein. The lentils are roasted before being seasoned, and are sold in shot packs making them easy to eat on the go.

nudiesnacks.co.uk



PINEAPPLE FRUIT SNACKS
THE DORMEN

New fruit bites, made with 100% fruit and crisped rice. No added sugar, sulphites or shortcuts.

thedormenfoodcompany.com



CHILLI BEEF BILTONG
HUNTERS

A premium protein-packed snack. This award-winning gluten-free biltong is pepped up with a piquant peri peri spice blend.

huntersbiltong.co.uk



SEA SALT
LOVE CORN

Love Corn has just launched multi packs of its Sea Salt crunchy corn snacks – ideal for lunch boxes. Each pack (of five) is sized for snacking, and contains less than 90 calories and 50% less fat on average than crisps, while being high in fibre.

lovecorn.co.uk



SWEET CHILLI
JUST CRISPS

Made from the brand's own potatoes and cold-pressed British rapeseed oil, and coated in a sweet, spicy, warming chilli flavour.

justcrisps.co.uk



PARMESAN MINI TONGUES
SEGGIANO

An alternative to cheese crisps. These little flatbreads are made in Piemonte for Seggiano, using extra virgin olive oil and Parmigiano Reggiano.

seggiano.com



ALMOND SALTED CARAMEL TRUFFLES
BOOJA-BOOJA

Grab and go two packs of the plant-based chocolate maker's scrummy, gooey, sea salted caramel and roasted almond truffles.

boojabooja.com



SMOKEHOUSE BBQ CORN NIBBLES
INDULGE

Smoky, savoury, crunchy corn bites. These are free from nuts and gluten and high in fibre.

novel-foods.net



DRAGON FRUIT CHIPS
SOUL FRUIT

Crispy, fruity, delicious bites in an exotic flavour. Something daringly different for snack time.

soulfruit.co.uk



SOUR CREAM & ONION LENTIL PUFFS
SAVED

Lentil puffs with a secret ingredient – crickets, to boost their protein punch. Contains 40% less saturated fat than crisps.

savedfoodco.uk



EATING ON THE GO

We are a nation of snackers...but what's fuelling British consumers when it comes to satisfying mid-afternoon hunger pangs?

In the UK we love a snack. Whether that's a cheeky little biscuit to dunk in our cuppa in the morning, or snuffling a bag of crisps in front of a good movie.

As sales figures show, there's been no slowing down of spending power here, especially as the trend for affordable 'treat moments' continues in the face of the cost-of-living crisis. Shoppers are demanding delicious bites that don't break the bank but, increasingly, are looking for snacks boasting health claims today, in light of HFSS regulations.

Snacking insider, Fiona Tomlin says health is a consideration in around 70% of snacking occasions which is "no surprise given the increasing focus consumers are paying to their wellbeing. We've already seen a growing preference for HFSS-compliant products, with a double-digit increase in volume, up 17% in 2023 compared to the previous year."

Beyond health, Fiona says shoppers are keen to see new, exciting innovations in the snacking aisle, and that NPD here is being driven by Gen-Z and their demand for bold tastes. Spice is especially key for this demographic and is here to stay, with more than half of consumers saying they love spicy food, and with the hot and spicy space in snacking seeing increased sales of 8.9% year on year.

Classic flavours shouldn't be ignored though, Fiona adds, saying although the crisp market particularly is fuelled by new developments in flavour, core shoppers in indy retail (particularly those aged 55 to 64) like the old favourites. Around 87% of consumers in this age group buy salted crisps, and 90% cheese crisps on a regular basis.



SNACKING ESSENTIALS FOR 2024

FRUIT

We've seen some incredibly fun products popping in this space,

UK SALES OF CRISPS, SAVOURY SNACKS AND NUTS ARE FORECAST TO EXCEED **£7** BILLION BY **2028**

MINTEL



which has grown considerably in recent years. Look out for 'healthier sweets' in enticing shapes and flavours made purely with fruit, all-fruit snacking bars, and dried fruit crisps, delivering a really great crunch thanks to new processing techniques. From dragonfruit to mango flavour, this is a new sweet spot for consumers.

DRIED MEAT

Low in fat and sugar, but high in protein, meat snacks have come a long way, and there is consistent growth in this snacking format. Shoppers are looking for premium versions of biltong and jerky, especially those boasting a British flag, and made with grass-fed beef or higher welfare free-range meat for sustainability.

HFSS

Shoppers want to boost their wellbeing, while satisfying that snacking itch. Look to stock products that are lower in sugar, fat and salt, with health-boosting properties (such as higher protein, added vitamins and minerals) and clean ingredient decks. Ultra processed foods are of increasing concern to consumers and the power of natural products is not to be underestimated.

Nut Butter Bar
CLIF BAR

The CLIF BAR Nut Butter Bar 50g is a quick, satisfying snack made with organic ingredients like creamy nut butters and rolled oats. This plant-based bar provides a balanced mix of nutrients, including 7g of plant-based protein and 9 to 11g of whole grains, to help power you through your day. With its delicious nut butter filling, the CLIF Nut Butter Bar is a certified organic, satisfying treat that appeals to your taste buds while fuelling your body. Available in three flavours including the best seller Peanut Butter.

worldofsweets.co.uk



PULSES

From brisket flavoured broad beans, to chocolate-coated chickpeas, roasted lentils, pulse crackers and crisps, and savoury pulse blends, this is an arena to keep your eye on, particularly as pulses fit the 'protein-packed' bill.

GOURMET NUTS

Nuts sales increased by more than 8% year on year in 2023, again, because of all that magical protein in the pack.

Help your customers elevate their snacking experience by seeking out nut options that play into the latest trending flavours – from hot, to sweet and spicy and meaty.

FUN

We've noticed some really cool developments in snacking in the last 12 months. They include rice bites, cauliflower chips, snack-sized savoury crackers, corn nibbles, an explosion of puffed pork rind (a lower fat version of scratchings), and so much more.

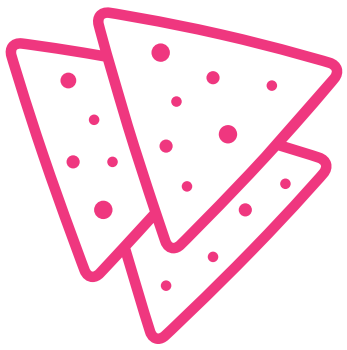
It's so key to stock the essentials (like ready salted crisps), but experiment with some of these newcomers and see what hits the mark with your customers.

SWICY

Dial up the heat, and add a twist of sweetness. Swicy as a flavour profile is everywhere right now. We're predicting the 'it' ingredient (hot honey) will land in snacks this year, so keep your eyes peeled. Look for snacks that bring together fire and a hint of sugar. Thai chilli crisps or rice cracker snacks are a familiar, recognisable place to begin.

INDULGENCE

The dopamine hit of a really good piece of chocolate or a handmade biscuit or cake is just what many consumers are after. There are plenty of options in this space for retailers now. From mini packs of luxury chocolates, to individually-sized chocolate bar portions, and grab-and-go packs of shortbreads and cookies. Artisanal varieties, keenly priced, should fly off the shelves this year.



IN **2024** THE UK CRISPS AND SAVOURY SNACKS MARKET WAS ESTIMATED AT **£3,483** MILLION. FOR THE SAME PERIOD NUTS WERE VALUED AT **£367** MILLION, POPCORN AT **£144** MILLION AND MEAT SNACKS AT **£60** MILLION

SNACMA



SUSTAINABILITY COMES FIRST

Consumers are voting with their feet when it comes to sustainable food and drink, choosing products made in a 'cleaner' way and sold in recyclable or plastic-free packaging

There's been a noticeable shift in consumer buying patterns in the last two years, as shoppers put more consideration into what lands in their basket. 'Sustainable consumerism', says Statista, has come about through increased awareness of the importance of protecting the environment, and just two ways the public are looking to make a difference are by choosing items with sustainability claims, and products in packaging they can easily recycle or compost. Around three quarters of those asked by the analyst in 2022 and 2023 said recycling or composting is perceived as one of the easiest and most accessible ways they felt they could make a positive impact on the world around them.

WHAT ARE SHOPPERS LOOKING FOR?

B CORP PRODUCTS

This is one of the most recognisable signifiers for shoppers that a brand has put the work in to consider its environmental policies.

GRASS-FED

Be it at the butchery counter, a ready meal, or a meat-based snack such as jerky, grass-fed beef is a buzz phrase right now. It signifies higher welfare and better farming practices.

ORGANIC

Organic still matters – to consumers and the planet. For the environmentally-conscious, Soil Association or Organic Farmers & Growers labelling gives them strong direction in store. Some brands are choosing not to certify in order to save money, so make sure you know your products, and mark up anything organic that's not labelled officially, to give those items a boost.

BRITISH

Although the British flag might get some stick out on the streets (where it's often aligned with far right-wing politics) when it comes to food and drink, shoppers love to see the Union Jack firmly stamped on labels. British farming standards are known to be some of the best in the world, and consumers appreciate this, and are keen to support British industry.

INCREASING ORGANIC LAND USE IN ENGLAND TO **10%** (A **THREE-FOLD** INCREASE FROM CURRENT LEVELS) WOULD DELIVER SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

ORGANIC FARMERS & GROWERS



CLEAN DECKS

Consumer suspicions around ultra processed food and drink, in light of the regular media presence of scientists, doctors and other experts highlighting its negative impacts on health, have meant they are very interested in 'clean' ingredients labels.

100 BILLION PIECES OF PLASTIC WASTE ARE THROWN AWAY EVERY YEAR IN THE UK, AVERAGING **66** ITEMS A WEEK PER HOUSEHOLD

STATISTA

WHAT IS B CORP ?

B Corps are businesses that have demonstrated that they meet high standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency. For many, joining the B Corp movement is a way to formally recognise their mission – whether that is specific sustainability goals, or a broader aim to be a force for good. To achieve the certification, businesses must demonstrate high social and environmental performance by going through an assessment process. They must also make a legal commitment by changing their corporate governance structure to be accountable to all stakeholders, not just shareholders. Lastly, they must make information about their performance publicly available.

Certified B Corporation

Wild Garlic Sauce
TRACKLEMENTS

Wild Garlic is found in abundance in woodlands and hedgerows across the UK from March to May. It's an extremely versatile plant and this sauce, made with the broad green leaves of wild garlic balanced with mustard and honey, is perfect for anyone who loves the taste but wants to bypass the foraging and cut straight to the flavour. Satisfying our want to preserve the seasons, this keeps the essence of spring alive throughout the year.

tracklements.co.uk



Peppermint teas
SUMMERDOWN



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

summerdown.com

STOCK CHECK 2024 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



COTTAGE DELIGHT CLASSIC LEMON CURD

Sold in the brand's new streamlined jars, a timeless delicacy combining creaminess and zest with a sunshiny lemon flavour.

cottagedelight.co.uk



COCOA & HAZELNUT SPREAD ISLANDS CHOCOLATE

A rich, sumptuous spread, made with the brand's own organic Caribbean cocoa and double the amount of Piedmont hazelnuts. Palm oil-free.

islandschocolate.com



ISLE OF MULL CHEESE BISCUITS ISLAND BAKERY

Richly flavoured, easy-to-nibble cheesy biscuits, made with organic ingredients (including cheese from the neighbouring farm), at the bakery, powered by renewable energy.

islandbakery.scot



TWISTED LEMONADE GUNNA DRINKS

A refreshing immune-boosting lemony soda from the planet-friendly brand, with added zinc and Vitamin C.

gunnadrinks.com

THE NATION'S **FAVOURITE** CUISINE

From antipasti platters, to pizza, meatballs, ragu and lasagne – Italian food is deeply ingrained in our food culture in the UK now, both at home, and when we're eating out

He may be biased, but Antonio Picciuto of Buongiorno Italia thinks Italian food and drink is still some of the best around. "It's so versatile," he says. "And there's so much variety. You can create anything with Italian ingredients. Also, it's accessible. I always say, you can come into my deli and create a whole dinner party." And that's what sets the Italian offering apart. Bruno Zoccola of Valentina Delis agrees, saying Italian cuisine is, "The most popular in the whole world. People know it and understand it. They love the variety of options within Italian food, and the focus on healthy ingredients."

To get it right, both say what you stock must, crucially, be better than the supermarkets.

For success, Antonio says you should...

- Have a mixture of prices across your ranges that reflect your customers' spending powers: "Don't be a food snob! You need to have that £7.95 bottle of oil as a great everyday option. Then, if customers want something better at a higher price tag, you can talk them through what you have."

- Get the basics right: Too many delis miss the mark by being 'out there' with their range of products. "It's important, at the very least, to have everything a client needs to create an entire meal. If you have tomatoes, they've got to be amazing tomatoes. You need great buffalo mozzarella, nice bread, superb pasta and wine."



ITALIAN TOPS THE LIST OF BRITS' FAVOURITE FOODS, EATEN BY MORE THAN **51%** OF THE POPULATION ON A REGULAR BASIS

YOUGOV

2024 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



BIO ORTO PUTTANESCA TOMATO SAUCE

Bio Orto grows all of its own produce organically, and this exquisite sauce is an authentically delicious expression of their ripe tomatoes, olives and capers.

justgourmetfoods.co.uk



BELAZU VEGAN BASIL PESTO

A vegan take on the brand's classic Genovese pesto. Free from dairy, soya, nuts and wheat.

belazu.com



SUMA ORGANIC ITALIAN BLACK CHICKPEAS

Tasty, budget-friendly and sustainable store cupboard staples. These really catch the eye and can be used in many different dishes.

wholesale.suma.coop



GAROFALO FARFALLE TRICOLORE ITALIAN PASTA

Red, green and white durum wheat pasta bringing the enveloping taste of Italian tradition and colour to the plate.

pasta-garofalo.com



SEGGIANO ORGANIC MELANZANE PASTA SAUCE

This gorgeous sauce features quality and provenance of ingredients, cooked in the traditional Italian way without starch thickeners, sugar or flavour enhancers.

seggiano.com



RISO GALLO CARNAROLI RISOTTO 1856 PORCINI

Prepared with a traditional recipe, mixing high quality dehydrated ingredients with the very best Carnaroli rice. Easy to prepare, and utterly delicious.

risogallo.co.uk

THE **ESSENTIAL** INGREDIENT

David Josephs of Panzer's Deli, and Simon Warren of The East Street Deli select their in-store Italian must-haves.

SWEET TREATS

Simon says his bestsellers are Sicilian cannoli which "are a real footfall driver".

SNACKS AND NIBBLES

Simon points to the Seggiano range, finding the brand's Lingue flatbreads popular throughout the year, whether for summer picnics, or as part of a cheeseboard. "Taralli biscuits, in their signature swirl shape, are also popular among customers.

PASTA

Stocking Garofalo is a sign of attention to quality, and David's also a fan of Benedetto Cavalieri which is "probably the best dried pasta".

FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

"Fresh produce is absolutely key," David says, pointing to delicate stuffed courgette flowers with ricotta. "You can't get anything better than that," he says.

OLIVE OIL

There's always more than meets the eye with olive oil. "We started in Sicily with one olive oil supplier. We now have three," David says. That's because each blend is so different, from olives that grow in the rocky soil in the south to the richer soil in the north, with gives an earthier flavour.

SAUCES

No Italian deli (or any other deli for that matter) is complete without a range of exemplary sauces, made with real ingredients and no artificial additives. The duo say fresh pestos, from Genovese-style with basil, to pesto rosso, made with sundried tomatoes, are a must. These should sit with the likes of arrabiata and puttanesca sauces, to help shoppers put together a quick, easy, delicious Italian meal in minutes.

CHEESE AND CHARCUTERIE

Gorgonzola, Pecorino, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Mozzarella and Fior Di Latte are non-negotiables at the deli counter, alongside Burrata, which is seeing huge growth as an ingredient up and down the UK. Also, don't forget, Simon says, to offer DOP meat products like Parma ham, San Daniele ham and mortadella. And spicy nduja sausages is essential.

Organic Oat Pasta
SUMA

Suma's new Italian-made organic oat pasta is one of the first available in the UK. Made with organic oat, corn and rice flours, it is certified gluten free and ideal for those with gluten intolerance, or who simply prefer to reduce their gluten consumption. The texture is tender and the taste delicate, so it's perfect to use wherever you'd otherwise use a wheat pasta. The eye-catching packaging has a luxury deli feel. It's made from cardboard from a sustainably managed forest, fully recyclable and 100% plastic free. Linguini, Rigatoni and Casarecce available.

suma.coop/wholesale



A taste of Italy
COOKS&CO



Cooks&Co has extended its range of store cupboard ingredients with the addition of five new authentic Italian antipasti lines. All products are sourced from Italy and can be added to grazing boards, antipasti platters or served as dish accompaniments to bring true Italian flavour. Favourites include Diavulillo - spicy mixed vegetables - which are a perfect accompaniment to meat or used to top fresh crusty bread and Saporiso, a selection of mixed vegetables which make great addition to rice or pasta.

rhamaronline.co.uk





STAYING IN IS THE NEW GOING OUT

Movie and pizza nights, grazing party platters and wine and crisp pairing – consumers are having more fun than ever before...eating at home

The Covid pandemic had a huge impact not only on the way we view health in the UK, but on our attitudes to dining as well. Takeaways and prepped meal pick-ups became the norm. We invested in cocktail bars, barbecues and pizza ovens to entertain ourselves at home. And treat boxes and meal and food gift experiences became a thrilling part of our lives. Essentially, we used food and drink to make ourselves feel good, in spite of what was going on in the wider world around us.

And we haven't stopped. Consumers have continued to invest in 'treat moments' at home during the cost-of-living crisis, reserving nights out for celebrations. So, what are the trends driving the 'big night in'?

READY TO DRINK COCKTAILS

Look up and down any supermarket spirits aisle today, and you'll find the category is booming, with an ever-increasing range taking up valuable space. In 2020 RTD cocktails and mixed drink sales grew by 75%, and according to Grand View Research, the market size is expected to grow at a CAGR of 16.2% by 2030.

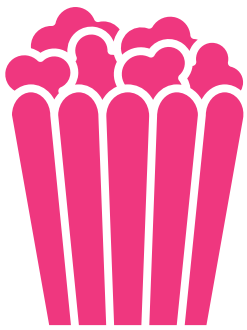
Consumers, the analyst says, are increasingly looking for lower calorie options in this arena, and for cocktails made with real ingredients.

They're all about "escapism", says drinks guru Pritesh Mody of World of Zing. "They're seen as holiday cocktails you'd enjoy on a beach. Cocktails are about indulgence."

London Cocktail Week 2024 identified trends for this year as Martini with a twist (think yuzu and chamomile infusions), the Hugo (prosecco, elderflower, lime and soda), orchard fruit flavours, Asian influences (using sake and umeshu), and tropical hints of banana and pineapple.

COCKTAIL MAKING INGREDIENTS

Hands up if you bought a cocktail cabinet or built a bar in your garden during lockdown. Lots of people did, finding fun and joy in a bit of at-home mixology. Sales of cocktails for home consumption have risen 44% year-on-year, and consumers are more invested than ever before in recreating the bar experience in their own kitchens. Ensure you're prepared to meet their desires by stocking all the classics, from vodka and gin, to dark and white rum, vermouth and tequila, alongside key ingredients such as bitters, sodas, grenadine, sugar syrup...even foaming drops and dried garnishes, for the 'wow' factor. Go all-out this summer, perhaps, with a dedicated cocktail-making section in store. Include ice trays and moulds, mixology equipment, recipe cards and tasting days with spirits brands.



THE UK BAGGED POPCORN MARKET IS WORTH **£144** MILLION

SNACMA

CRISP AND WINE PAIRING

TikTok food fads can be, let's face it, truly awful. But something that's not going anywhere is wine and crisp pairing, which dominated the social media platform in 2023, leading to respected wine schools and wine bars turning the dial up on the 'high-low' trend.

Laura Kent, founder of Yorkshire Wine School, says the pairing has huge appeal because it's so tantalising, while co-founder of Vino Gusto wine shop, Jake Bennett-Day, says, "Are crisps delicious? Tick. Is wine delicious? Double tick!"

Jakes adds that what makes crisps and wine matching such a pleasure is that "you really don't need to overthink it and get pretentious about it. Crisps are salty and often fatty – they make you reach for a drink which should, in turn, make you want to go back for another bite."

Jake's ultimate pairing is Torres Black Truffle Crisps with a glass of Blanc de Blancs Champagne, while Laura reaches for Thai sweet chilli crisps and off-dry Riesling.

Why not do some tastings with your staff and position crisp and

STOCK CHECK

2024 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



CHOCOLATE FUDGE GOURMET CARAMEL POPCORN JOEY KOALA

A decadent popcorn, made by smothering the kernels in buttery chocolate fudge caramel sauce, and baking each bite to perfection.

joeykoala.com



BARON BIGOD CHEESE & ONION CRISPS MADE FOR DRINK

Enjoy one of the UK's best-loved modern artisan cheeses, in crisp form. The earthy, creamy flavour of Baron Bigod is matched with sweetly savoury onion.

madefordrink.com



CHEEKY WEE KISS ANGEL'S DARE

The brand's flagship tipple. A tangy, tart, sweet combination of dry gin, rhubarb, ginger, strawbrery and cranberry juice.

angelsdarecocktails.co.uk



PEAR & ELDERFLOWER SOUR VAULT CITY BREWING

The fruity flavour of pear melds together with a delicate fragrant backdrop from the subtle addition of elderflower.

vaultcity.co.uk



DESSERTS COLLECTION FIELDFARE

End that dinner party in style and without any fuss, choosing one of Fieldfare's luxury ready-to-cook options, from Chocolate Fondant to Apple Fritters

field-fare.com



LASAGNE BYRUBY

Generous layers of grass-fed beef and pork mince, cooked slowly in a rich tomato sauce, between egg pasta and cheesy bechamel.

byruby.co.uk



33% OF READY MEAL BUYERS AGREE THAT NUTRITIONALLY COMPLETE PRODUCTS SIGNAL GOOD VALUE

MINTEL

wine matches together in store, or on promotion together? The device could work especially well on a Friday when many consumers want to kick their feet up with a glass of something delicious and a few nibbles.

BARBECUE

Charcoal barbecue sales have exploded in recent years, and there's been a noticeable shift in the way we're grilling in the UK say chefs and butchers. American barbecue culture, particularly, is catching up with our penchant for sausages and burgers. "People are cooking with larger cuts like a traditional American smokehouse would do," says Alistair Angus, owner of Thurston Butchers, who says customers want "big statement pieces. Rather than going into a butcher just to get a few sausages, people will do a whole brisket, slow smoked, and carved into bits like a sharing platter." Stay ahead of the trend by offering pre-orders of American-style cuts such as brisket, short ribs and tomahawks, as well as some options in the counter. It's worth investing in a premium range of rubs, marinades and sauces with an American (or Asian) slant too, according to insiders.

PIZZA

Home pizza ovens are huge in the UK. Scottish brand Ooni, which makes portable ovens, saw a massive 264% increase in revenue in 2022, and has boosted its staffing by 500% to cope with demand.

Those who've invested in Oonis or bigger, Italian-style ovens, are taking their pizza crafting seriously, and are keen to make every pie as authentic as possible. Help them on their way by collating a pizza-making section this summer, bringing together everything they need, from San Marzano tomatoes, to Italian flour, antipasti, and even sustainable kindling, wood and briquettes. Don't forget to offer buffalo Mozzarella and Fior di Latte cheese, and excellent quality salamis and pepperoni too.

CRAFT BEER

There is huge demand in the UK for craft beer, with Ed Barnes (a beer enthusiast and owner of Hopsters beer shops), saying he doesn't see that passion going anywhere anytime soon. Unlike the States where "people will just go and grab a six pack of what they like", Ed says British consumers want to try something different every time they're in store, so regularly switching up your offering is vital.

The current 'big hit' in craft beer, Ed says, is sours, which are rapidly taking the place of cider in popularity. "They are a force to be reckoned with, and Vault City are really leading the way. They make the most deliciously fruity beers." There's something for all price points, Ed adds, and for all palates, from the funky, traditional Belgian sours, to modern day brews. "The word sour might turn some people off, but ask your customers if they like Haribo Tangfastics. If they do, in all likelihood they will like sour beer too. It's that sweet, lip-puckering flavour." Sour craft beer, Ed says, pairs especially well with cheese, making it the deli or cheese shop owner's best friend.

GRAZING PLATTERS

The grazing and charcuterie board trend just won't quit, but it plays right into the hands of speciality food store owners and managers. Consumers entertaining at home want to make a big impression on their guests, so dedicate some time to staff training on the topic, maybe coming up with your own curated lists of suggestions to bring together between the cheese and charcuterie counter, and cracker and preserve aisles. Or take the guesswork out for shoppers by curating your own pre-priced grazing hampers or boxes for them to order, pick up and enjoy. Offering something a little bit different is key here. Perhaps fruit cheeses (fig and Port is a winner), candied nuts, or truffled honey, to help elevate their experience.

READY MEALS

We all lead busy lives. And having the hard work taken out of cooking (especially for dinner parties and get-togethers) can alleviate a lot of stress... and, crucially, minimise the amount of clearing up to do afterwards.

There has been steady increase in sales of ready meals and prepared food in the UK, but with one key factor – quality. Greater understanding of ingredients decks and ultra processed foods has made consumers wary of what they're buying when it comes to this category. Industry has responded in kind, with several new, modern brands, leading the way, delivering dishes and products made only with natural ingredients, just the way customers would make them at home.

Earlier this year Fieldfare partnered with YouGov to look into modern dining habits, finding that "people want to treat themselves with tasty dishes at home, and that's about the occasion. The pleasure of enjoying great-tasting food together and, for many, about relaxing at home rather than always just cost saving, says managing director Matt Whelan.

Fieldfare's products "lend themselves perfectly to creating a restaurant-like meal at home," Matt adds. "Not only do we always deliver on taste, but because our products are sold loose or in individual portions, everyone can choose what they would like, just like in a restaurant."

Tricky-to-make, individual desserts are real winners for the business, including its award-winning Chocolate Fondant, Summer Pudding, Vanilla Panna Cotta, and French Apple Tart. And nibbles and light bites, perhaps to precede a homemade main course, are a hit too, such as Fieldfare's Mac 'n' Cheese Bites, Sweetcorn Chilli Fritters, or Crispy Calamari.

Ready meals are not just for the depths of winter, adds Erin Dust of Supper Club, which has become so successful it launched 13 new lines at the end of 2023, across its British, Italian and Asian lines. Its bestsellers are beef stew with dumplings, tarragon chicken, and lasagne, and Erin says the meals are especially popular in stores located in tourist destinations, giving visitors quick, easy and affordable meal options they can trust, without the expense of eating out.

The brand's offering really does have year-round appeal, Erin says. "You think of ready meals as cold weather products, but we've launched dishes great for al fresco dining. Two risottos, meatballs al forno, and black truffle chicken pasta."

Erin says customers are also trading up their takeaways for premium ready meals, which they can stow away in the freezer for nights when they don't want to, or can't cook.

MOVIE NIGHTS

Staying in and renting the latest release, hunkering down on your own sofa for the evening, has become the norm. And consumers are looking for snacks. Snacks that alight their taste buds, and bring a party to their palate. Rising stars in the category to consider include nachos, gourmet crisps, breadsticks and dips, and flavoured broad beans and corn 'nuts', as well as chocolate-dipped fruit and nuts, and artisan popcorn.

According to SNACMA, the UK bagged popcorn market is worth £144 million, and although there is innovation in flavour, almost all sales are accounted for by Sweet, Salty, Sweet and Salty, and Toffee varieties, so as well as having a few curveballs in your popcorn offering, it pays to get those classic flavours right, choosing the very best you can.

Creamy Chicken & Asparagus Puff Pastry Pie

FIELDFARE



Family-owned business Fieldfare is famed for the quality of its individually frozen food, and its award-winning Creamy Chicken & Asparagus Puff Pastry Pie is no exception. Pairing up beautifully with any number of seasonal veg, this is a failsafe crowd-pleaser. Succulent chicken in a creamy white wine sauce is encased in a golden puff pastry purse, and bakes to perfection straight from frozen. Customers can choose exactly as many as needed, arming their freezers with a deeply satisfying and impressive meal-maker.

field-fare.com

Gourmet ready meals

CHEF ON BOARD



Chef on Board hand makes award-winning ready meals with fresh ingredients, mainly sourced by the team in the South West. Each dish delivers that delicious homemade taste, and special diets, including vegetarian, vegan and dairy and gluten free are catered for, with low fat and high protein options also available. Chef on Board offers single and double portions of its main meals, alongside desserts and side dishes.

chefonboard.co.uk







‘Our business has become a tourist attraction’

Suffolk Food Hall exemplifies how successful a farm diversification project can be. As part of our Daring to Diversify series, we speak to the team to find out just what makes the destination tick



It takes a great deal of vision to stand in a field, survey a clutch of outbuildings and barns, and reimagine them as not just more than the sum of their parts, but something that could be truly extraordinary.

To then see that vision come to fruition, and become more successful than you could have ever thought possible, must surely be a dream come true?

The Paul family knew they were about to build something special when they broke ground on Suffolk Food Hall. Perched alongside the county’s iconic Orwell Bridge, and backing onto prime walking territory, the location screams ‘destination’.

Coming from farming stock, predominantly trading in grain and animal feed, brothers Rob and AJ, and cousin Oliver, really believed in their idea, to create one of the country’s biggest rural food halls. A place where local and regional producers could showcase their wares, and where shoppers could find everything they needed, all under one roof, without relying on a trip to the multiples.

“They had a chat,” says marketing manager Nick Punter, “and decided they really wanted to open a place that puts local food first.” Planning permission was granted around an old barn on family land, and the hall would open a year later, generating huge excitement in the area. “It’s nothing like it is now,” Nick says, acknowledging the business has grown and changed significantly over more than 15 years. “But they used a lot of the original barn space, and pillars and features in the renovation, and started with a butchery, grocery, deli and bakery, fishmonger, garden centre and gift and home store.”

It was a significant investment, “and there was nothing else like it at the time,” says Nick.

Today, Suffolk Food Hall is a go-to not only for shoppers and those fancying a spot of lunch or cup of coffee in the cafe or restaurant, but it’s an attraction in its own right, drawing in families, who love to sit outside on sunny days with something cool from the ice cream hut…or burn off steam on the bouncy pillow.

Adding new reasons for different demographics and users to visit the site on a regular basis has been key to the success of this diversification project and “every year visitor numbers have grown,” says Nick. “We recently looked at our car park situation, and the longevity of stay, and it was a lot longer than we thought. People are coming here, and staying. We’d now say we are an attraction site. We’ve got the fresh counters, the cafe, the restaurant, the ice cream hut, food workshops…. there’s a lot going on.”

Refurbishing the restaurant in February 2023 has also had an impact on visitor numbers. “We’ve seen an increase of around 34% on bookings,” reveals Nick.

Growth has happened steadily on site, as the team grew to understand how and when customers were using the food hall, and what else they wanted to see.

One of the biggest changes was the transformation of a secondary barn, creating a first floor restaurant with wide-reaching views over the water and countryside beyond, and a series of unit below, housing other tenant businesses.

More recently a smaller cafe within the food hall has expanded to include a covered outdoor space and upstairs indoor dining area, meaning there are more opportunities than ever before for customers to stay and enjoy their time here.

“Other changes have included the fact we brought the garden centre in house. It used to be run by Bourne Garden Centre, but we’ve made it our own. We’ve also expanded the bakery and deli counter, and the butchery has definitely grown. Half of it used to be a fishmonger.

“We’ve got better outside seating, and more of it. We’re hosting more events and workshops. An outside assault course gym has opened. And







we're going to be announcing a new play park soon."

A taste of the food hall

A key driver to Suffolk Food Hall is its local messaging. Residents in the county, and visitors passing by or chalking it up as a day trip during their holiday, know they can experience a true flavour of Suffolk as soon as they step out of the car. "Stocking local is one of our core values, and our buyers spend a lot of their time scouting and looking for really great products from the area," says Nick, who reveals sales of local goods make up a decent proportion of revenue. "A lot of what we have (including fruit and veg) is from Suffolk or East Anglia, and then we pick the best of the rest from further afield."

Top sellers include the Stokes Sauces range "which always sell well".

"And we sell a lot of wine from our local vineyard at Shotley. Local honey sells very well too. And chocolate from Linden Lady in Essex, or Fairfields crisps."

Absolutely crucial to the success of the food hall though, and ringing through the till in huge numbers, is produce made on site – be that bread from the onsite bakery, tartlets in the deli, or meal solutions at the butchery counter. Nick says these are things customers actively seek out, and that they've seen growing interest in prepared food, which is something they will continue to invest in.



> "Having the restaurant retains people on site. It's a way for us to showcase some of the products we make and stock in the food hall"

"We're always making innovative new things for customers to try. We've got a team of production and development chefs both on the deli and butchery side, making everything from our sausage rolls and samosas, to ready-to-cook items. There's a huge amount of growth there and we're currently looking at doing more of our own frozen range. People really are looking for great quality ready meal options, and we've been inspired a lot by Goodies Food Hall in Norfolk, who do a huge amount of these. We see them being an important part of Suffolk Food Hall in the future."

Cooking up a storm

Outside of the main food hall, the renovated restaurant keeps customers coming back to dine... and to shop. "Having the restaurant retains people on site," says Nick. "And it's a way for us to showcase some of the products we make and stock in the food hall. Our own burgers are on the menu. Our steaks are on the menu. We try to use as much of our fruit and veg as possible in the restaurant too. It's another prong to our offering and obviously gives a boost to our income."

Although it has previously tried opening during the evenings, Nick says it's breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea that are the restaurant's bread and butter, and while they arrange the occasional evening event, he doesn't see a market for opening fully at night. "It just doesn't really work for us," he admits. "But we're always busy at breakfast and lunch. That's our core customer. And we're focussing on that."

Set around the restaurant in the Cookhouse building are multiple independent businesses, predominately food and drink-related, and the team are proud this space has acted almost as an incubator, providing the facilities for start-ups particularly to begin their journey.

Brands such Choose Spice, Syms Pantry, Carpenter's Gin and Bwownies all set their stall out here.

"And we have Ilyia's Kitchen. She runs workshops and cookery classes in our commercial kitchen, for children and adults. It's always busy over there. Then we've branched out and diversified further. A kitchen fitter has a showroom in our old meeting rooms, which we got rid of in Covid times. We've got a health and beauty business, Bodylines, that's moved in from Ipswich town centre, and a podiatrist, and osteopath."

All of these additions "help to make ours a viable business. They can use our customer base, and we can use their customer base. It really works for us as a whole, we all promote one another, and that can only be a good thing," Nick adds.

These days, it seems to run a successful farm shop, deli or food hall, you need to not only excel in food and drink, but offer an extra spark or two. Something that sets your business apart, beyond being able to deliver products customers can't readily find in supermarkets. And Suffolk Food Hall is an example of how slowly but surely discovering your feet, knowing your audience, and giving them both what they want, and what they didn't know they needed, can be a recipe for revenue.

"My advice, if you're thinking of expanding or diversifying is to just do it," says Nick. "We had the guys from The Goat Shed in Norfolk down here and we introduced ourselves and showed them around, and showed them what we're doing. They went on to grow, and they're just now expanding again. I think the demand is out there for unique businesses like ours. Lots of people are moving away from pre-packaged supermarket goods. There's a greater understanding of the benefits of better quality food in terms of health and the environment. As we've gone through the last few years, with the pandemic, people are trying to look after themselves better, and to treat themselves when they can...and that's where we come in!"







> "This was a significant investment. There was nothing else like it at the time"



FINAL CALL

Event season is in full swing in the food and drink industry, and the *Speciality Food* team has been keeping a close eye on all the exciting news and launches from the shows on our radars. The buzzing venues of food shows are brilliant places to uncover what's all the rage in fine food and find out the inside scoop on new product developments and innovations. In this issue, we also wanted to bring that knowledge and insight straight into your shop through a special new section: *Trendsetters 2024*. With so much noise around what are the biggest and best food and drink trends, we've combed through the expert views and analysis to bring you the products and categories that are actually worth the hype.

As much as we love delving into food and drink trends, we're also partial to the classics, and they will certainly be on show in the coming months as we gear up for the summer season. Customers will soon be making their way to your butchery counter with questions on creating the perfect barbecue and lining up for your knowledgeable insight on the best tasting seasonal cheeses. We've had a rainy start this year — though we hope the early Easter helped to boost your sales – but the spring sunshine is still bringing with it a sense of expectation for the warmer and brighter months to come. We're looking forward to seeing your summer displays and the creative ways you sell products this season.

With global conflicts continuing and British election updates unfolding, the news isn't always an inspiring place for independent businesses. But in one piece of good news, this March marked a whole year of falling food inflation. Cost pressures on households were, as of March, at their lowest level since September 2021. We know that the trading environment has been tough for indies during the past few years of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis, so we look forward to finding out what this news means on the ground – just in time for summer splurges.

As we inch ever closer to the halfway point of 2024, we're keen to hear from our readers about how their year is unfolding. What are your most surprising best-sellers? What questions are your customers asking? What are your biggest concerns as we head into the summer months?

We love hearing from our readers. Do you have a story to share or expertise to pass on? Please get in touch with courtney.goldsmith@artichokehq.com

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5 MINUTES WITH
JOANNE MOORE, GREENALL'S



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE DRINKS INDUSTRY?
I think something creative for sure, I'm a big fan of skiing, the outdoors and like to practice yoga regularly so maybe some sort of hospitality business that involved these elements would be fun to do.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
I had a part time job as a silver service waitress in our local Italian restaurant when I was 16. I remember on one of my first shifts whilst trying to serve a regular customer some vegetables I dropped a carrot baton into his glass of wine. The chap simply smiled and thanked me for the goldfish.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
When I'm creating new products I take my inspiration from memories of places I have been to, the aromas, tastes, sounds. I like to also look at new trends in food and drinks in general to see if they will resonate into our industry. Keeping an open mind is what generally inspires me.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
That would have to be creating new products, seeing them being brought to life on the shelf and seeing others enjoying them, such as the premium gin brands I've created for Quintessential Brands - BLOOM Gin, Thomas Dakin Gin, Opihr Gin and Berkeley Square gin.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
A nice piece of steak, a green salad, and a glass of red wine followed by cheese and biscuits and sticky toffee pudding.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
I have two currently that come to mind. First, if your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough. And second, the devil is in the detail.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
Porridge for breakfast whilst on holiday with my husband in the Cameron Highlands in Malaysia. I thought I was getting porridge oats, but what I actually got was congee which is a traditional Chinese rice porridge. It takes a good while to prepare this dish which is just white rice, left to simmer over low heat, in plenty of broth seasoned with fish sauce. Not what I was expecting for breakfast, so I think it was more the shock to my tastebuds.





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TRIED & TESTED

SMOOTH CHOCOLATE & ORANGE PEANUT BUTTER, MOTHERNUTTER

One of the newer arrivals from this gourmet nut butter brand. Only the best, high-oleic peanuts are used in the product, alongside cacao, a touch of salt, orange zest and orange oil. We've really been enjoying this spread over our toast in the morning – and even used some to sandwich together a chocolate cake. While it contains no added sugar, the orange zest and oil lift the peanut butter, giving it a brightness that wakes up the taste buds. And the rich, aromatic flavour of well roasted nuts is there. But perhaps the thing we like best is its spreadability. Often gourmet peanut butters split, making them tricky to use. This one's consistency is just right.



mothernutter.co.uk

LAMB ROGAN JOSH, LODGE FARM KITCHEN

The founders of Lodge Farm Kitchen spent time in India absorbing the cultures and tastes, before heading back home to experiment, conjuring their own spice mixes and pastes. The result is a new range of curries and sides, for meat eaters, veggies and vegans. Sold in compostable poplar trays, each dish is made using only natural ingredients, just the way customers would cook them at home. We liked the warmth and fire generated by this Rogan Josh, which had a real depth of flavour, married with melting nuggets of lamb.



lodgefarmkitchen.com

DRAGON MOJO, MIXTONS

The world of RTD cocktails is growing at a pace – with producers scrambling to come up with ever new, exciting flavour combinations. Mixtons have managed to achieve the trifactor of cool branding, newness, and (crucially) flavour, with their products, including this Dragon Mojo. Catching the eye with its peppermint and flamingo pink can, inside what you get is a burst of sweetness, balanced by a sharp whack of kiwi, mellowed by the rum and mint. Served over ice, it's totally refreshing.



mixtons.com

THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Tom Tsappis, chef patron, Killiecrankie House, Perthshire



Food in Scotland is in a really interesting place right now. The country has always been famed for the quality of its ingredients, such as game meats and shellfish, and also for those products with historic, and enduring significance, like haggis and whisky; but I think a modern breed of chef is taking those things and using them in a-traditional, exciting ways, by incorporating flavours and techniques from around the world.

For example, at our restaurant we are currently serving an oyster course, with the oysters coming from Cumbrae Oysters, over on the west coast. The oysters are poached lightly in smoked ham fat, and are served with a dulse kimchi made from seaweed harvested in the East Neuk of Fife, and a Laphroaig emulsion. All parts of the dish are harvested from different coastal parts of Scotland, and come together to form something new that also tells a very strong story of provenance, and nods to both classic Western and Eastern culinary traditions. For me it is at the confluence of cultures and traditions, that food can be at its most exciting.

There has also been a re-emergence of centuries-old techniques and foodstuffs coming back into vogue - think brewing, fermenting, foraging, smoking and distilling. Craft breweries and distilleries are popping up everywhere, and artisan cheesemakers are producing cheeses that can rival any from the continent. We work with one in particular called Strathearn cheese who are making some really interesting cheeses, including a washed-rind cheese in the vein of Epoisses from Burgundy, that is washed in Glenturret Whisky. We also buy bere barley kernels from Barony Mills up in Orkney, who are the only producer of this ancient varietal that was planted by the Vikings and may well be the oldest grain in the country.

At the restaurant we also work with a forager who brings us the most wonderful local chanterelles and ceps in the summer, as well as indigenous plants and berries such as sweet woodruff, pineapple weed, spignel, crowberries, blaeberries and black chokeberries. These provide local character and interesting bursts of flavour to many of our dishes, and I suspect these sorts of things will become more and more mainstream, and more widely sought after in time.

> "We work with a local forager who brings us the most wonderful chanterelles and ceps in summer"

PARTNER CONTENT

Garofalo

PUT A SPRING IN YOUR STEP

Are your chillers and shelves prepared for the warmer weather?

Standby. Summer's on its way. With the change in seasons comes the inevitable reappearance of household barbecues. It's prime al fresco cooking time, and undoubtedly barbecuing in the UK has taken off.

While American cuts and flavours are headlining this sector, it's worth remembering too that the trend towards Italian food in the UK is also growing apace. And many Italian ingredients and dishes lend themselves perfectly to the barbecue or, of course, the pizza oven. Its appearance on cooking shows and on meaty menus in cities across the nation, has seen porchetta rise in popularity. This meltingly delicious roll of pork, usually folding a loin into a belly, with a generous seasoning of herbs, garlic, salt and pepper, is a speciality of Italy's Lazio region, where it's often cooked over a wood fire. An ideal choice, then, to recommend at the butchery counter for customers who hooked onto the lockdown pizza oven trend.

Another way to lean into consumers' growing obsession with larger, sharing cuts, is by offering thick slices (around 2-3ins) of porterhouse steak – perfect for mastering the art of bistecca alla Fiorentina....a simply seasoned homage to beef, that's usually carved at the table with a feast of salads and steamed or roasted baby potatoes.

Outdoor cooking Italian-style isn't limited to meat. Burrata and real buffalo Mozzarella are seeing enormous increases in demand,as consumers seek to deliver a more authentic experience at home.

Tucked into a cast iron or heat proof dish, drizzled with oil, and roasted alongside ripe peppers, tomatoes or courgettes, then given a flash in a pizza oven until oozing, there's something magical about the milky, creamy, yielding nature of a burrata. A final flourish with a really good pesto and a sprinkle of seasoning, and perhaps some crusty Italian bread on the side, and lunch or dinner can be on the table in a matter of minutes.



Even pasta can get the pizza oven treatment. Armed with a jar of beautiful, traditionally-made Italian sauce, some bronze die cut pasta, and more of that magical Mozzarella, customers can pre-prepare a homely tray or dish, to be fired off in the smoke of live flames as their guests arrive, for the ultimate in relaxed entertaining. Don't forget to stock other key antipasti essentials (or picky bits) to help shoppers get the party started. They're looking for quality, flavour and convenience, and will pay a premium if you can deliver all three. Show them in store how they can very quickly prepare plates of grilled artichokes, sundried tomatoes, grilled peppers, multicoloured olives, and dips, to whet their guests' appetites before the main event. A taste of summer, and simplicity itself.



NEW

VINTAGE CHEDDAR
CAPTAIN BULLDOG
CLAWSON FARMS

WENSLEYDALE WITH MANGO & GINGER
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