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April 2025

SPECIALITY FOOD

CONNECTING THE FINE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY



GRATE

MOZ MURPHY: KEEPING IT CLEAN
P. 32



THE KNOWLEDGE BANK

ANDREW NIVEN: HOW TO SELL BUTCHERY
P. 42



RHUG ESTATE

LORD NEWBOROUGH: TOP-SELLING BBQ PICKS
P. 44



In this issue

6 **Joe Wall**
Cress Co

10 **Oliver Lloyd**
consultant

34 **James Grant**
No2 Pound Street

REGULARS

18 **Farm Shop Focus: Darts Farm**

20 **Trend Watch: Tracklements Takeover**

22 **Product News**

28 **Centrespread: Store Cupboard Staples**

32 **Counterpoint: Hygiene**

34 **Cheese Uncut**

54 **Last Words**

FEATURES

16 **Meet the Producer: Chapman's Seafood**

24 **Natural Food Expo 2025 preview**

26 **Savour Northern France**

30 **Daring to Diversify: Macknade**

36 **The Cheeses I Love**

38 **Spotlight On: Rutland Red**

40 **A Taste of the Past**

42 **Feed the Appetite for Better**

44 **Al Fresco Season**

46 **Farm Shop & Deli Show 2025 preview**

52 **Sweet Somethings**







EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the April issue of *Speciality Food*, where you find the team full of the joys of spring.

There's plenty to get excited about this issue, as we herald the start of warmer weather with a look at the opportunities provided by barbecue season (p44) – including commentary around the value of stocking better quality meat (p42) – and share valuable intel about the consistent popularity of ice cream and desserts, and the trends that are tickling consumers' tastebuds in 2025 (p52).

We also explore the culinary prowess of Northern France on page 26, and meet some of the most exciting speciality producers from the regions of Normandy and Hauts-de-France.

Plus, we highlight the very best products, brands and expert sessions to relish at this year's Farm Shop & Deli Show and Natural Food Expo events.

Elsewhere, Exeter's Darts Farm get the Farm Shop Focus treatment on page 18, while cheese-loving retailers share their favourite products – and pairings – on page 36.

Here's to a bright spring for all.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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The future of fighting crime in retail

Incoming changes to the law should help retailers clamp down on criminals, but what else can they do to protect their businesses? *Speciality Food* reports

It's a tricky time to be in retail. Besides incoming cost rises (energy, NI contributions and wages) instances of theft, and assaults against retail workers have increased.

A report earlier this year by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) showed that reports of violence and abuse were up to around 2,000 per day during 2023/24, up from 1,300 the previous year. These incidents included sexual and racial abuse, and threats with weapons. At the same time, satisfaction with the way police intervene remains low, with 61% of BRC respondents saying their experience was either 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Theft remains at an all-time high too, costing the nation's retailers more than £2 billion per year. It is hoped, industry leaders say, that a new Crime and Policing Bill in 2025, will help drive these figures down during what is predicted to be one of the most difficult financial years in the sector.

What tech can help stop thieves in their tracks?

While retailers wait for lawmakers to line-up policing with their expectations, a raft of technological change is ongoing in the security sector to help them stand up to criminals and protect their businesses.

Georgia Cumming, corporate account manager for retail at DeterTech, said SmartWater forensic marking is becoming effective. "It can be sprayed on the offender and goods from a distance, remains on skin and clothing for weeks, and has a 100% conviction rate in contested court cases," she explained. "That means suspects can be identified and charged long after they've fled the scene."

A less physical solution is the integration of AI-driven security, cloud-based monitoring and real-time deterrents, which can help staff to intervene before a crime occurs.

"Paired with cloud-connected surveillance, retailers can retrieve evidence instantly, coordinate remote security teams, and improve response times," said Matthew Dawes, head of enterprise solutions at HALOS, adding that he considers the most powerful frontline tool today the body-worn camera (BWC). "Unlike overhead cameras, there's no hiding from a body camera – they move with the employee, capturing clear facial footage and recording audio for a full, indisputable record of an event. If a criminal sees body-worn cameras in use, it's another factor they must plan around, increasing the risk of getting caught and potentially deterring them from committing the crime altogether."

Toby Ball, client relations manager at Harrison Retail, is also an advocate for AI solutions, alongside RFID tags, Smart Shelves and sensors. "The data captured by such technology, in turn, allows loss prevention providers to better understand patterns and vulnerabilities in-store and adapt their solutions accordingly."

It's essential, Toby said, for retailers to adopt a multi-layered loss prevention strategy that takes store layout and fixtures into account – a strategy that ensures the shopping environment remains customer-friendly, accessible and visually appealing.

Are there any security advancements to look out for?

Technological advancements are redefining retail security, and this trend is projected to continue, said Sarah, who predicts even greater use of AI-integrated monitoring pods and CCTV systems that track shopper behaviour to detect suspicious activity, alongside increased facial recognition technology to identify repeat offenders, feeding into a database.

There will be a shift too, Matthew said, to an expansion of body-worn cameras beyond security personnel, to frontline retail staff, who he said must be sufficiently protected. "Body-worn cameras will increasingly be seen as essential tools for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of every retail worker, providing them with the same level of security and accountability currently available for security and loss prevention teams."

Collaboration through networks and databases is, Sarah added, also important in the future of retail crime prevention.

"Collaboration will provide a strengthened shared intelligence network through which data can be shared. By accessing real-time threat detection data and through the identification of known shoplifters, businesses will be able to better prevent occurring crimes and keep staff safe."

Toby agreed, saying, "Tackling the growing issue of theft must be a joint effort between the Government, police and retailers. Retailers do not need to take the law into their own hands, but there are ways to hamper potential criminals to make it almost impossible for shoplifting to take place. As retailers understand the detriment of defensive merchandising on sales, they are shifting from individual product protection to entire shelf protection solutions.

"Retailers should aim to balance product interaction and security to avoid jeopardising sales, especially impulse and promotional purchases. In doing so, they should avoid rushing into costly tech investments that could compromise customer shopping experience, especially when more affordable, bespoke loss prevention shelf solutions are available."



UK experiences strong growth in organic market

Producers making organic food and drink are reaping the benefits of huge growth in sales value and volume, according to the Soil Association Certification's *Organic Market Report 2025*

In 2024, sales increased (to around £3.7 billion) across every key channel, with multiples, independent retailers, non-food and hospitality enjoying a particularly strong year.

These figures, said the organisation, are a powerful indicator of both performance by brands, and growing interest from consumers.

"The organic market delivered abundant growth across the board last year, out-performing non-organic in both volume and value growth – a key indicator of the health and potential of the market as we look to the future," said Soil Association Certification's commercial and marketing director, Georgia Philips.

"And the signs are strong that this growth is here to stay with increasing consumer demand, particularly from Gen Z shoppers who are increasingly motivated by healthy and sustainable choices and seeking out organic products."

There are though, she admitted, some "significant" barriers to overcome in the UK so organic can scale up further, adding that the Association has joined forces with leading nature and environmental NGOs to make the case for a 10% Government target for land to be farmed organically.

More than half of respondents reported a positive year, with a fifth enjoying a significant sales increase. The highest share of organic sales (49%) are being seen in the dairy and produce categories, which have become key entry points for shoppers seeking natural, minimally processed and healthy options.

Within the independent and specialist retail sector organic sales rose by 9% to £518 million, and in foodservice, after a difficult couple of years, they were increased by 6.5%.

Online, too, continues to perform well, with organic sales twice as likely to be made digitally.

As Georgia pointed out, Gen Z, and younger shoppers (under 24) are buying into the organic message more frequently, making up 67% of sales alongside lower and middle-income households.

The report shows that lower-income shoppers display higher rates of purchasing organic products consistently across multiple categories. They're also more likely to buy organic on special occasions.

Additional data from vegetable box specialists, Locavore, show that 28% of its shoppers have an annual household income of less than £20,000, and half of those are under £20,000.

"Cost of living pressures haven't gone anywhere," said Georgia, "but, now accustomed to higher prices, consumers are prioritising other areas such as health and the environment. As these priorities become ever-more embedded in shoppers' buying habits, the future looks bright for organic."

Farm shop reopens with new look

Yorkshire Agricultural Association's Harrogate farm shop, Fodder, has recently reopened with a new look and name.

In what has been its biggest refurbishment since opening in 2009, the newly coined Fodder – Great Yorkshire Food Hall had been closed since January, and following a refit and weeks of work can now proudly stock more local produce than ever before, alongside operating its café, known as The Kitchen.

TV presenter Christine Talbot and Peter Wright from The Yorkshire Vet reopened the food hall alongside general manager Vanessa Pitt and Yorkshire Agricultural Society CEO, Allister Nixon.

Changes include permanent tasting tables showcasing Fodder suppliers, and a brand new menu featuring produce from the shop, which also has a new logo and branding.

"We have really close relationships with our suppliers and producers," said Vanessa. "We work with them on special promotions and pay them fairly and so putting them front and centre of Fodder is really important to us. The refit really allows us to do that, not only with a bigger range, we also have permanent tasting tables for sampling every week which helps spotlight businesses even more."



Allister added, "This is a new era for Fodder to take it into the future with a contemporary feel while retaining its warmth and connection to Yorkshire producers. We pride ourselves on looking after our suppliers while raising money for the farming community as all profits go back to the Yorkshire Agricultural Society to continue its support for the industry."



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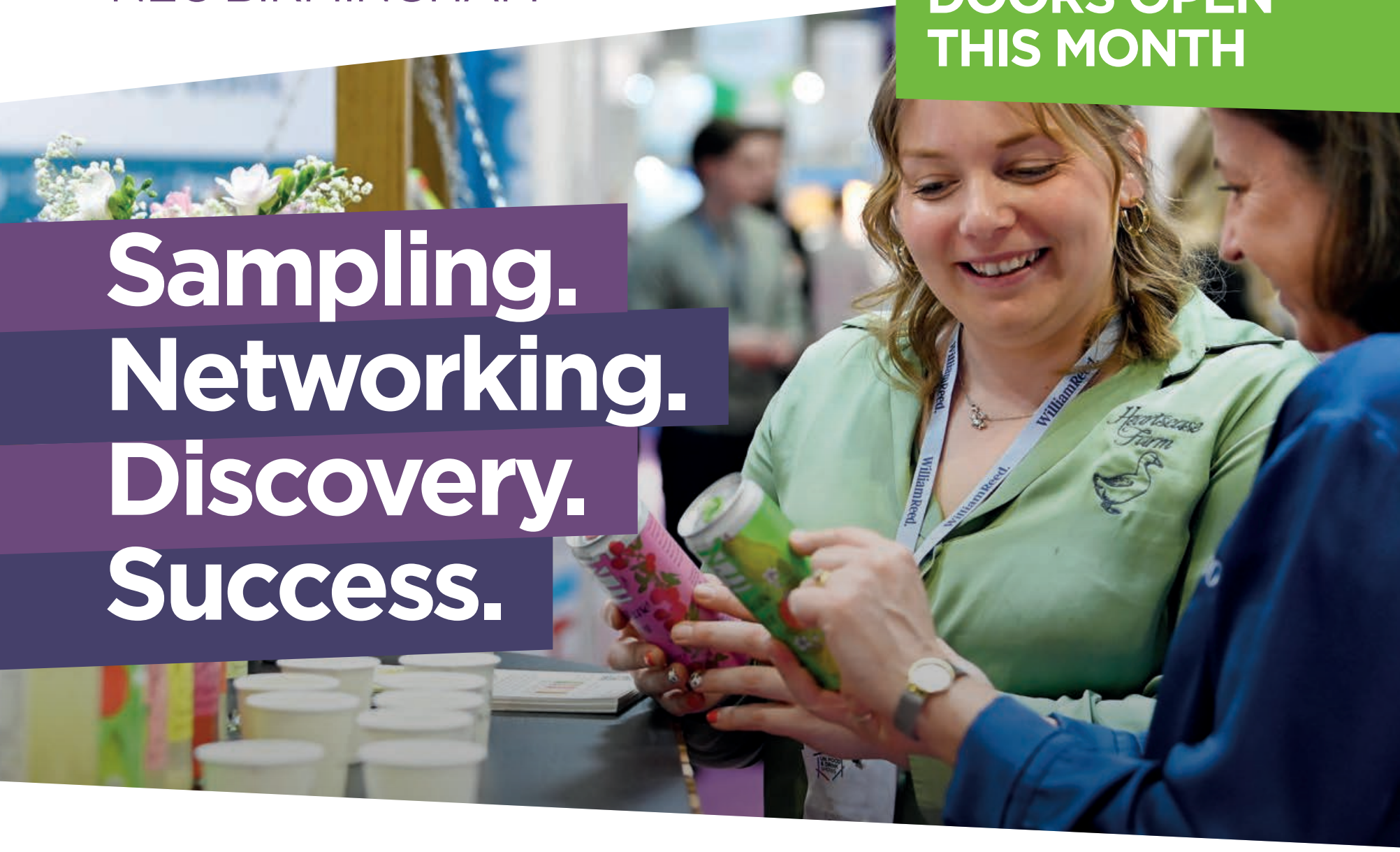
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"It's the people that matter"



JOE WALL
CRESS CO

I've done this now for just over 20 years. I started when I was 19, having grown up much further north at the top of Scotland, and originally was quite keen to become a producer. When I connected with other producers, I found that they were of the opinion that distribution was the problem – there were a lot of good products out there, but they couldn't get them to retail – so they asked me to do some sales and delivery work for them. This was at a time that farm shops were taking off, so it was a case of being in the right place at the right time.

The scale of the work we do at Cress Co is much larger these days, but the philosophy remains the same – maintaining connections with people, and that we're doing our best work when nobody really notices that we're doing our job seamlessly. We should be the connection between the supplier and the customer that takes a bit of hassle out of the process and smooths the transition.

We provide delivery, warehousing, invoicing and order capture – including a lot of the dirtier jobs, which we've kept in-house, things you probably don't notice until they don't work, and by doing them well we hope we add value to the process.

The reason I love the fine food industry so much is that we're dealing with people, but from my point of view, if the transaction goes wrong it doesn't matter what else you are doing – you have to get that right, so we work really hard to make that as good as it can be.

Having said that, I still speak to some of my first customers, and we try to keep the same drivers on the same runs and account managers on the same accounts. That way, if a transaction breaks down or there's a problem, customers don't mind so much – it becomes about how you fix the situation and look after your connection.

It's important for our customers to know that our door is always open – there is always a person on the end of the phone, whether that be your driver or account manager – because happy customers are the most important metric we work to. You can measure the cost of failed deliveries, profit per invoice, all these things that accountants love, but it's the people that really matter in the fine food sector.

Often issues stem from poor communication, so that's something we continually work on; we're not just dealing with contracts and tenders like elsewhere in the industry. We're all connected; suppliers speak to each other, customers speak to each other – it's very interlinked, and it's important for wholesalers to carefully consider where they sit in the equation.

For example, due to our size we can't be as nimble as we might like to be, so when it comes to trends we might need to direct customers to work with suppliers directly. Ultimately, though, we exist to make the process run smoother for the rest of the sector; we're not driven by turning a profit and would never choose cost over consumer – everything we do has to be a win across the board.

> "We're not driven by turning a profit and would never choose cost over consumer – everything we do has to be a win across the board"

Charity says consumers are being misled over animal farming

The Animal Law Foundation has revealed in its latest report, Food Chain Misinformation, that pervasive misinformation in the food supply chain is impacting public perceptions of animal farming and illegally impacting consumer decisions

Examples include misleading portrayals of animal farming on major supermarket and food producer websites, exaggerated claims of animal products being British, and the use of fake farm names by large retailers.

The report claims that despite 85% of animals in the UK being reared at factory farms, this is not what the public is being widely shown.

During The Animal Law Foundation's investigation it reviewed the websites, adverts and products of 47 producers and processors of dairy, eggs, chickens, ducks, pigs, turkeys and lambs.

Just three producers didn't feature animal imagery on their websites or products, and of the 44 that used images, 84.09% showed livestock living outdoors. While 61.36% also showed animals housed indoors, all of the animals appeared healthy, 29.63% showed spacious conditions, and 48.15% used blurry, cropped or unclear imagery. All major supermarkets were found to feature pictures of healthy animals outdoors on their corporate websites.

Also covered in the investigation were 30 random episodes of animal farming programmes across five UK channels – BBC1, BBC2, CBEEBIES, ITV and Channel 4. While all showed animals both outside and indoors, the indoor conditions were high welfare, without the standard treatment experienced on industrial farms.

The Foundation identified major UK retailers are making 'British made' claims to market meat and fish products largely made outside of Britain too.

Edie Bowles, executive director of The Animal Law Foundation, said, "Studies show just how much consumers care about animal welfare and make purchasing decisions accordingly and the law protects consumers from buying products based on misleading information. However, something has clearly gone wrong where 100% of supermarkets show images of healthy animals outside, yet in reality 85% are kept on factory farms."

Bowles added, "Just as regulators are cracking down on greenwashing, we need urgent action to address 'humane-washing' in animal agriculture. Consumers must be able to trust the claims made on the food they buy, and authorities must ensure that those who partake in misleading practices are held to account."

The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 Act, due to come into force in April 2025, prohibits unfair commercial practices, which is where a practice that is likely to cause the average consumer to take a transactional decision that they would not have taken otherwise, as a result of a misleading action or omission, which can include false or misleading information. The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 are currently in force and are largely the same regarding this prohibition.

It's hoped the new act will be used to prevent misleading advertising claims within the food and drink industry in future.

> "Studies show just how much consimers care about animal welfare and make purchasing decisions accordingly"

SFI decision causes concern in farming

The Soil Association has slammed the Government's decision to halt Sustainable Farming Incentives (SFIs).

The announcement was made just weeks after farmers wanting to convert to organic practices should use options within the new SFIs.

But now these options have been frozen, with no assurances for the future of sustainable farming available.

In the wake of the move, the Soil Association is calling for payments for organic conversion and maintenance to be retained, farmers who started but who had not finished their SFI applications to have those honoured, priority to be given to smaller producers, and payments for agroforestry, to be retained.

The Soil Association's chief executive, Helen Browning, said, "This damaging move by Government seriously risks the viability of the organic sector and threatens the supply of sustainable British food. It has frozen farmers out of the opportunity to meet the rising demand for organic food, which will instead continue to be met by imports. The Government is disregarding what shoppers and farmers want, alongside the need to protect nature.

"We are also very worried that smaller producers and family farms, particularly fruit and veg growers, have not had enough opportunity to access the scheme and that they will be most impacted by this sudden change."

Defra's new UK recycling model enforced

Simpler Recycling, Defra's new scheme regulating recycling and waste in Britain has just come into force, aiming to make collecting and processing waste more streamlined.

Under the new rules, as standard most households and workplaces will have four containers for non-recyclable waste, food/garden waste, paper and card, and other dry, recyclable materials such as plastic, metal and glass.

This universal standard has been set to ensure everything that can be is collected for recycling in every region.

Businesses in England with more than 10 employees should have adopted Simpler Recycling on 31st March, while those with fewer than 10 full-time employees are exempt until 31st March, 2027.

The rules apply regardless of how many employees are on-site at once. For example, if you have two locations with five full-time members of staff at each, you must still comply.

If you haven't already acted, now's the time to take action. While details aren't available yet, Defra will likely begin issuing fines for those not complying with the reforms. The first step for a breach will be a compliance notice from the Environment Agency, and beyond this, further sanctions could be enacted.



Mark Hall, waste management expert at businesswaste.co.uk, said, "While we would never advise businesses to ignore important rule changes like this, we can understand why many are frustrated. Communication from the Government has been very poor, with many businesses unaware the changes were even taking place. It's fallen on waste management companies like ourselves to reach out to customers to ensure they don't fall foul of regulations."

Mark adds that he's hearing from businesses still in the dark about how the rules work, who they apply to, and what potential penalties will be.

"The generic nature of the guidance has left many questioning what changes they need to make. For example, do all offices with 10 or more employees now need to instruct workers to take home food waste to avoid adding collection fees? While the new rules will bring undeniable environmental benefits, many businesses feel they are the latest in a line of measures which will only increase operating costs."

Visit the Defra website for the latest information on Simpler Recycling.

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Businesses should report on nature risk

A new report by think tank Green Alliance calls for the Government to set a timeline for mandatory reporting by companies to motivate them to invest in nature restoration. This new reporting would make visible for the first time the impact UK businesses have on nature, the extent of their dependence on it and the nature-related risks they face.

As well as holding businesses accountable, the report says the UK needs a new economic indicator to enhance or supersede gross domestic product (GDP).

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, the report finds. This asset damage and the impact of nature degradation worldwide is predicted to suppress GDP by as much as six per cent by the 2030s, and polling shows that a majority of the public in England think big companies and the government aren't doing enough to protect the natural environment.

Heather Plumpton, head of research at Green Alliance and an author of the new report, said, "The UK's severe and continuing nature decline is evidence our economic system is dysfunctional. We perversely destroy natural assets we depend on heavily for future growth and national wellbeing. Businesses rely on nature to make profits but don't necessarily value it properly, as incentives to look after it aren't embedded in the system. We've set out immediate and longer-term steps ministers should take to recognise nature's proper value, so we can begin turn the tide on nature loss here in the UK."

Customers are putting health first

The recent *Consumer Horizon Report* from analyst, Vypr, has recognised that the landscape in retail is changing, as shoppers continue to prioritise their health and wellbeing



These changes, it says, are creating fresh opportunities for retailers and brands to strengthen their connections with consumers, while shifting their focus to appeal to today's buyers.

Consumers, the report explains, are looking to tackle a range of health concerns using these products, the most common being digestive health, followed by supporting the immune system and heart health.

Those aged 18 to 24 favoured functional food and drink that boost their energy and metabolism levels. Taste is marginally more important than price in the functional arena, and people reducing their meat intake or following a diet for sports activities are generally more willing to pay a premium.

Consumers are more trusting about health claims on packaging too, with 46% of consumers saying they put trust in functional food information on-pack, and women generally believing the claims more than men.

Key concerns highlighted were increased focus on getting better sleep (25%), mental health and wellbeing (23%) and boosting energy (20%).

Eighteen per cent of those asked said they were turning to chamomile tea to help them get quality sleep in the evenings, and 16% say they were supplementing with magnesium.

To improve mental health and focus, 24% of those surveyed said they're reaching for more antioxidant-rich foods such as berries and leafy greens while 21% were snacking on nuts and seeds for their health benefits, and 21% considered coffee helpful for energy and mental clarity.

At the same time, Vypr found many consumers are actively cutting back on food and drink they consider as having a negative impact on their health – 25% have reduced their intake of highly processed foods, 19% are consuming fewer energy drinks and high-fat foods, and 18% are choosing to drink less alcohol.

"Despite a growing number of health-focused products on the market, consumers continue to opt for simple, widely available foods and drinks over emerging health trends," said Vypr founder, Ben Davies. "For example, when it comes to energy, 38% of consumers choose bananas, followed by energy drinks (33%) and coffee (25%). Meanwhile, fewer than 10% are interested in trying newer, lesser-known energy-boosting ingredients such as guava, yerba mate and goji berries."

Retailers and manufacturers face a growing challenge in meeting these evolving health priorities while maintaining affordability.

Ben said, "The key issue is ensuring healthier options remain accessible. The challenge for brands is to innovate at scale without driving up costs, as affordability remains a major factor for UK households."



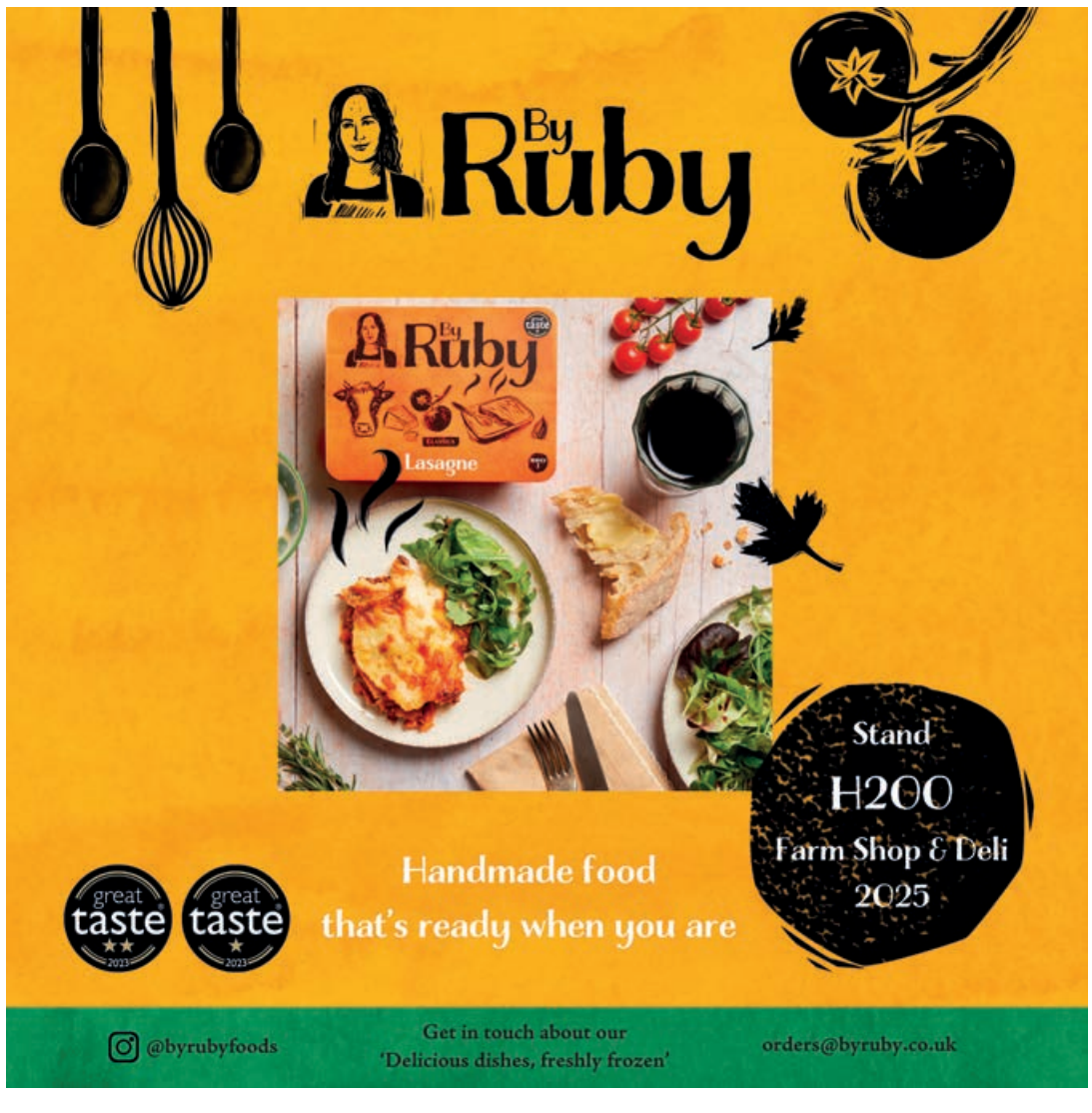
Music matters in retail

Music technology company Audoo, has partnered with GEMA, the German performing rights society, to launch a world-first 'Music Impact Study' to quantify the commercial value of background music in gastronomy and retail spaces using accurately tracked data.

The pioneering study, powered by GEMA, found that background music is an economic factor that can be measured scientifically. By comparing footfall and spending in commercial spaces, with and without background music, the study revealed that the use of background music increases sales in retail by an average of 8% and in gastronomy by an average of 5.4%. The economic benefits of using background music prove that a music license is a worthwhile "investment".

"The fact that background music influences customer behaviour, customer retention and spending positively has been investigated many times, but there have been no concrete figures on the increase in sales so far. GEMA's 'Music Impact Study' closes this research gap", said project manager Sonja Schoenfeld.

The success of the research underscores the value of precise music usage tracking and its potential impact on businesses. GEMA has described the research as a significant milestone and recommends that other rights societies engage in similar research.



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"Lessons from Dubai"



OLIVER LLOYD
CONSULTANT

I had the pleasure of visiting Gulfood 2025 in Dubai (UAE) in February and was blown away by the sheer scale and variety of what was on display. On both days, my phone told me I did over 20,000 steps, which honestly felt like it!

It was a great place to see the latest and newest trends coming to life. A large number of products were trying to add 'interest' to their products with added crunch, from air fryer-friendly potato popcorn to sesame sticks. There were toppings for ice cream that contained glitter, apparently made from gold. There was a massive stand from Lamb Western, one of the biggest manufacturers of chips, which promoted triangular crunchy chips that were twice as crunchy as regular chips. Their crunch also lasts an extra 30 minutes, which is essential when you think how many burgers and chips are delivered by bike worldwide. It did strike me as a great example of a very simple piece of innovation where the only difference was how the chips were cut, patent pending, one assumes.

There was an endless supply of products with truffle in them, although it is worth noting that this was more of a win for the flavour industry than for the truffle growers of Europe. Ostrich eggs sat nonchalantly in fridges, and emerging brands promoted crackers with Lebanese Zatar. At least 50 businesses had at least visually mastered the art of making mass-produced quality cakes that look like they have come from a top-end patisserie. It made me look at the cake shops all over London offering Instagram-friendly cakes in a slightly different light.

There was a vast spread of gourmet crisps on display, showing how this trend is very much alive all around the world. This included crisps flavoured with everything from pink Himalayan salt to black caviar. Some crisps were made from novel items such as shitake mushroom, snap pea, millet and seaweed rice. There were collagen bites that claimed to be "your daily dose of beauty" with the benefit of eternal youth. There were frozen oysters from Japan that you could eat sashimi, which I tried and tasted pretty good, although I admit I was nervous.

It was also evident that our industry is happy to stretch some significant trends from proactive health and protein to immunity in an ever-growing number of categories. There were sipping liquors that offered immunity and even some children's lollipops that would keep your children in school (via better immunity)!

Some of the weirder innovations I saw were a self-heating tin that was being showcased as a solution for hot coffee and soup on the go. The slightly alarming chemicals that smoked from underneath were anything but appetising. Many drinks were available in novel formats – from suspended basil seeds to gel drinks. But some things caught my eye, like edible biscuit spoons and ice cream cups that could make the industry more sustainable.

I also had the chance to try things I had never tried before. Camel ice cream and milk was undoubtedly a show highlight, and the claim of being "camelicious" is a genuinely fun bit of marketing speak! But probably the most delicious thing I tried was 24-month aged Feta from Kostarelos, a dairy founded in 1937.

I was slightly depressed by the UK's presence at the event. Based on the general view that we need to grow out of the current state, it is surprising that the UK government did not set up a more engaging area. Whilst there were several of our great challenger brands like Potts and Hill Top Honey, most of the star performers were missing. By contrast, the Indian and German governments had massive stands, with both large brands showing their latest products and some spaces for new and innovative brands to expand into new markets. We have one of the most dynamic food and drink sectors out there, and more brands should be supported to get their story out there.

Beyond the show, it was incredible to see how the Dubai pistachio phenomenon has spawned an entire shadow industry capitalising on the trend. The original brand, Fix, which became an internet sensation, is only available in select stores and via Deliveroo on a first come, first served basis twice daily. At £20 a bar and with limited supply, local and international brands are jumping on the bandwagon, so why not? Pistachio and chocolate go well together; sadly, the same cannot be said for all the trends in the industry!

> "At least 50 businesses had mastered the art of making mass-produced quality cakes that look like they have come from a top-end patisserie"

FICT campaign launches to increase understanding of European charcuterie



Despite the growth in popularity of charcuterie boards and sharing platters, a new survey, conducted by FICT (Les Entreprises Françaises de Charcuterie Traiteur), has revealed that almost half of consumers quizzed do not understand the term 'charcuterie' or do not believe they have tried charcuterie products before

In fact, the word 'charcuterie' has evolved into a catch-all term for any kind of product found on a so-called deli board.

The word 'charcuterie' is derived from French origins, and refers to the practice of preparing and preserving meats through methods such as curing, smoking and fermenting. Although UK consumers seem to be familiar with the term, when questioned specifically about what types of products 'charcuterie' refers to, only a small percentage knew that it denotes cured meats.

UK traders recognise consumer confusion and therefore mostly stock a limited list of well known, European favourites such as chorizo, prosciutto, jamon Iberico, lomo, Jambon de Bayonne PGI, saucisson sec and pâté. This provides a huge opportunity for FICT as it launches its three-year campaign to grow awareness of a broader range of charcuterie for both UK traders and consumers.

"We're excited to begin our education campaign, revealing how many incredible and delicious products there are in the European charcuterie range," says a spokesperson for FICT. 2Our research shows that retailers perceive European charcuterie positively, and that a third of consumers are seeking out French charcuterie products specifically. But consumers are struggling to find the products they are looking for due to a limited offering from wholesalers."

Over the next three years, FICT has set out to educate UK consumers and promote charcuterie products such as Saucisson, Rillettes, Pâté and Boudin Noir. 'There are so many delicious and exciting products for our UK audiences to discover and we believe the activity we have planned over the next few years will support them on this learning,' they said.



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Farm Retail Awards winners announced

The very best farm retailers in the UK have been revealed at the national Farm Retail Awards. Organised by the Farm Retail Association (FRA), the awards celebrate the cream of the crop in the industry, showcasing a huge array of businesses across Britain and are the only awards judged by fellow farm retailers

This year's ceremony was held at The Eastside Rooms in Birmingham and hosted by broadcaster and food and drink champion Nigel Barden, who said, "It's been a huge honour to host the Farm Retail Awards this year. The passion within the farm retail sector is truly inspiring. These awards not only highlight individual success, but alos shine a spotlight on the importance of supporting local and the remarkable businesses who are shaping the future of the industry."

The winners were:

- **LARGE FARM SHOP OF THE YEAR**

DARTS FARM, DEVON

- **SMALL FARM SHOP OF THE YEAR**

CASTLE FARM, KENT

- **FARMERS' MARKET OF THE YEAR**

LENHAM COUNTRY MARKET (RUN BY M FARMERS' MARKET), KENT

- **FARM CAFE/RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR**

THE FARM TABLE AT DARTS FARM, DEVON

- **FARM SHOP BUTCHERY OF THE YEAR**

MILLETS FARM BUTCHERS, OXFORDSHIRE

- **PICK YOUR OWN OF THE YEAR**

GARSON FARM, SURREY

- **RISING STAR OF THE YEAR**

RIVER COTTAGE KITCHEN AND STORE, DEVON

- **ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

CRESS CO, FIFE

- **LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

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FRA chair, Emma Mosey, said, "So much hard work goes into running an independent business, and we are incredibly proud of the brilliance demonstrated by all of our members. The Farm Retail Awards highlight the exceptional standards within our industry and showcase the dedication and innovation that makes farm retailers such a vital and thriving part of local communities."

Letting the public see farms in action more important than ever

Farmers across the UK are being encouraged to take part in Open Farm Sunday (8th June) this year to help the public understand their vital role in food production and food security

Organiser LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) will be providing ongoing support for host farmers to help them connect with consumers and provide firsthand experience of the value of farming with nature.

Taking part is incredibly rewarding, said LEAF education specialist, Sam Wyman. "Even the simplest items and tasks – like touching some grain or holding an EID tag – can be truly eye-opening for visitors. You'll get the most from your event by using a handful of props that engage the senses and help you share your knowledge in bitesize pieces."

He continues, "Everyone I've ever worked with to host an OFS event is absolutely buzzing at the end of the day. Farmers take real pride in what they're doing, and that shines through. This enthusiasm is what piques people's interest."

Recent OFS data shows that 91% of visitors on the day feel motivated to buy more British produce afterwards.

Giving access and sharing stories and expertise can help farmers bridge the knowledge gap and reinforce the importance of supporting local farming.

"With over 150,000 visitors attending OFS events each year, the impact this initiative has on the public's understanding of sustainable farming is huge," adds Mr Wyman.

"They're willing to learn, and clearly the best person to tell the story of British farming is farmers themselves. Spreading that insight and encouraging appreciation for what farmers do, day-in-day-out is more important than ever."

Farmers can register their Open Farm Sunday event at farmsunday.org and access a wide range of freely available resources, including webinars and promotional materials to help make each event a success.

5 tips for Open Farm Sunday

- **Ask for help:** Don't be afraid to seek help from your network. Vets, seed and feed merchants or other local cluster farms could all add their expertise

- **Keep it simple:** Be realistic and set expectations to have a brilliant OFS experience that feels manageable and rewarding. If you feel comfortable hosting 20 people on a farm walk, then stick to that plan. Whatever the size of your event, OFS recommend using a free online ticketing service to manage visitor numbers and timings

- **Short and engaging soundbites:** Visitors come in mixed groups, so keep explanations to two to four minutes per topic and tailor content to your audience. Encourage them to participate by asking them questions

- **Interactive props:** Identify everyday objects or aspects of farming that visitors can touch, see, and smell, as well as introducing hands-on activities, such as soil comparisons, worm charming or a nature hunt to make learning fun and accessible

- **Be yourself:** The public appreciates authenticity. Simply sharing what you do day-to-day is more than enough to inspire public goodwill as well as raise aware of how farmers are farming with nature



New study shows younger consumers choose taste over cost

A report, by baked goods supplier Délifrance has shown students value flavour rather than the cost of what they eat.

Prove It: A Bitesize Guide to Education Catering carries out a deep dive into what students want to eat, where they buy it, and what they look for in a retailer.

Five hundred 16 to 24-year-old students were invited to take part in the study, citing taste (34%), value (23%), convenience (16%) and quality (13%) as their most important buying factors.

Although value was the second most important motivation for participants, it does not necessarily mean 'cheap', said Délifrance marketing director Stéphanie Brillouet. "Students also insist on quality. Operators can meet demand for tasty products by offering baked goods that are fresh, hot and consistent."

Convenience also matters to busy students, who say the most important factors are that food and drink is quick to purchase (52%), quick to eat (47%), will fill them up (42%) and easy to eat on the go (41%).

With more than 550 colleges and universities across the country, higher and further education is a huge opportunity for café operators, restaurants and catering businesses.

'The private sector must be driven by the entrepreneurial spirit'

Joe Nellis CBE, economic advisor at MHA, shares his views on in the industry as we approach the Spring Budget.

Although unemployment remains at a three-and-a-half year high of 4.4%, the overall picture is relatively stable and at historically low levels.

Despite the well-cited growing pressures on businesses in recent months, a tight labour market means that we are not expecting any significant rise in unemployment.

Strong wage growth — average earnings have risen by 5.9% — will continue in the coming months, accelerated by the rise in the National Living Wage from April. Combined with an increase in employer NICs, this presents a very real challenge for business.

With increased employer costs on the horizon, how do businesses intend on navigating this challenge in the context of a tight labour market?

With labour shortages making widespread redundancies unlikely, businesses are being forced to find another method for offsetting increased costs if they are to maintain their current levels of profit.

The government will be hoping that this brings the private sector to refocus on a challenge that has dogged the UK economy for decades — productivity.

Entrepreneurs and business owners are often innovative people. Given a scenario where expenditure is growing and the pressure remains constant to maintain decent profitability, employers will have to find ways to get more from their money, whether this be through new ideas, new ways of working, or expanding into new markets.

If the private sector can react creatively and effectively, that could help to close the productivity gap between the UK and other advanced economies that has been a drag on the UK economy for too long.





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Consumers favour loose produce and less plastic

A new survey from WRAP's Love Food Hate Waste brand has shown that UK adults would prefer to buy 19 out of 21 common fruit and vegetables loose rather than packaged.

Statistics from the report revealed 78% of those surveyed said they would buy their usual fresh produce unpackaged if it were sold that way – the highest given answer compared to other packaging formats, followed by paper bags or sacks (77%), and cardboard trays, boxes or cartons (75%).

Less than half said they would be likely to buy in plastic packaging, trays, boxes or cartons (46%) and the only packaging with a lower preference score was wooden crates (43%).

The biggest reason for choosing loose over packaged products (68%) was that it allows shoppers to buy only the exact amount they need.

And of the 21 fruit and vegetable items measured in the survey, it's bananas that topped the list (70%) to be sold loose. It's older consumers, aged 76 and above (73%), or 55 to 75 (68%) who prefer the option of loose produce, compared to 38% of those aged 16 to 24.

WRAP's campaigning continues to highlight the overall benefits for consumers financially, and for the planet (in waste and plastic saving) that offering loose fruit and vegetables can bring.

For example, it said, if all of the apples, bananas and potatoes in Britain were sold loose, 60,000 tonnes of food waste could be saved each year.

The organisation has called for a consultation on a packaging ban across the 21 items it identified which could be sold loose, with a recommendation developed in conjunction with the food and drink industry, across the supply chain. Selling these types of produce free of packaging could potentially save 100,000 tonnes of food and 13,000 tonnes of plastic film being wasted in people's homes every year.

Love Food Hate Waste's senior campaign manager, Jackie Bailey, said, "In the UK, 60% of all food wastes comes from people's homes, with fresh fruit and veg making up the largest proportion. Buying loose fruit and veg has the potential to significantly cut the amount of food ending up in the bin, and we have the evidence that it is what consumers want. Now is the time for retailers and shoppers to make that reality. Increasing loose fruit and veg offerings in store will not only reduce plastic waste, but also enable shoppers to buy closer to their needs, slashing food waste, and preventing tens of thousands of tonnes of CO2 emissions."

Circular economy minister, Mary Creagh, added, "Farmers work tirelessly to put food on our nation's tables, so it is absurd that households are throwing away £1,000 a year in food that could have been eaten. Through our £15 million food surplus fund, food producers, charities and Government are working together to ensure more produce gets to those who need it most."

At the same time that WRAP highlights a rise in consumer interest in loose produce, new research by Aquapak has shown shoppers don't feel UK retailers and brands are doing enough to reduce the use of plastic packaging.

65% of those surveyed felt businesses were falling short when it comes to cutting plastic from the supply chain, with only 18% of those asked believing enough is being done.

The findings show that British shoppers want to see retailers take more positive steps towards reducing the impact of the packaging they use on the environment.

In the survey, 59% wanted to see conventional plastic replaced with an alternative material which can be recycled and doesn't harm the environment, 57% said more paper-based packaging suitable for kerbside recycling should be used, and 49% said retailers and producers should stop using traditional single-use plastic completely.

Aquapak CEO, Mark Lapping, said, "Our research shows that consumers want to see more from brands and retailers when it comes to cutting the use of plastic packaging. We recognise that businesses have many challenges to deal with when it comes sustainability, whether it is carbon, water or biodiversity but it is important that they don't just pay lip service to new technologies but opt for real change."

Over the next year 56% of those asked said they would try to buy more products without single-use plastic packaging such as polyethylene bags and hard-to-recycle crisp packets and chocolate wrappers. They said they're prepared to take even more extreme steps over the next three years, with 46% saying they will stop buying single-use packaged items and those difficult to recycle altogether.

Businesses facing environmental challenges through the supply chain should take heart, Aquapak says, in the fact that almost one third (32%) of consumers said they would be prepared to pay more for 100% recyclable packaging.

Retail sector shows highest skills proficiency in workplace

Despite a recent report showing a widening undergraduate skills gap, new research has revealed that the retail sector rises above the challenge.

Business finance experts at money.co.uk analysed ONS data to highlight the current skill proficiency amongst the UK workforce compared to the requirements of different sectors.

At least one in 20 (4.83%) meets the skill requirements for customer service roles. Considered to consist mostly of 'soft skills' jobs, employees are expected to have good competency in communications, problem-solving, relationship building, and product or service knowledge. These are relatively easy to learn without prior experience or qualifications, contributing to the higher proficiency level compared to other industries.

Money.co.uk expert, Joe Phelan, said, "Attracting and retailing high-quality talent, including through regular upskilling and reskilling, is essential to staying competitive and driving economic growth in any industry."

To consistently meet their skills requirements, businesses need to undertake strategic planning, he added. "This includes identifying current and future potential skills gaps, and saving to invest in necessary skilled hires and upskilling programmes.

"Creating a structured saving plan and utilising a business savings account to effectively manage your cash flow and consistently set money aside for these purposes is a good place to start.

"You can also look into cost-effective upskilling options such as Government support in apprentice recruitment via the National Careers Service (NCS) and reduced training costs via the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development."

> "Attractin and retailing high-quality talent, including through regular upskilling and re-skilling is essential to staying competitive"



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*Source: Circana Out-of-Home Pizza – KPI's and % change date to year ending December 2024.

MEET THE PRODUCER

Family-run Chapman's Seafoods is entering a new era, and there's plenty for *Speciality Food* readers to be excited about

All too often in the world of speciality food, heritage brands change hands in the name of investment and lose their hard-earned soul – but this is far from the case with Chapman's, which is entering a new era in its family-run history with its focus on quality and heritage fully intact.

The four Chapman brothers – Kevin, Simon, Paul and Steven – are unparalleled in terms of knowledge and experience of the fish industry, with many decades under their collective belts. "We've been in the fish business for all of our lives," begins Kevin Chapman, "right from when we left school and joined the family business".

After a period of working together, in 2007 the four brothers went in two different directions – with Kevin and Paul going on to form Chapman's Seafoods. While the brothers started out grading and packing fish for larger businesses, the stock market crash of 2008 hit home with Icelandic becoming harder and more expensive to source, so the brothers thought creatively – and nostalgically – about their next steps.

A family recipe, popular UK-wide

Their mother's fishcakes, once a favourite at the family table at home, were soon to become household go-tos nationwide thanks to the launch of Chapman's fishcakes. "Dad was a fish filleter on the docks and used to bring home a lot of fish after work," says Kevin, "so after working with a recipe developer to perfect the product we started selling them at farmers markets."

At-market consumer tastings went well, so before long the brothers were selling their fishcakes at farm shops around the country. "They were popular because they were a top quality product, not the usual mass-produced fishcakes you'd find at the supermarket," says Kevin. By using fresh produce and transforming it as you would at home – steaming and mashing potatoes and mixing them with familiar ingredients – the pair were making a name for themselves doing something they, and their family before them, could be proud of.





The range was four-strong and covered popular flavours: Cod & Parsley; Salmon, Lemon & Dill; Haddock & Leek and Haddock & Bacon. Haddock Florentine, Smoked Salmon and East Coast Crab Cakes are more recent additions, and the total Chapman's range now encompasses around 40 SKUs, ranging from handmade fish wellingtons to gourmet ready meals and natural fresh fish fillets and seafood.



A fresh start for Chapman's

Chapman's has undergone a number of iterations over the years, but arguably none are as exciting as the chapter soon to begin with Kevin's brother Simon at the helm; a new, larger premises brings an impressive scope for innovation and growth – excellent news for the UK-wide fanbase of Chapman's products and the retailers who sell them.

"Last year, reaching retirement age, Paul and I decided to look for a buyer for the company," says Kevin, "and our younger brother Simon showed an interest which we were thrilled about – it meant that the business would stay within the family and that our family name could remain at the centre of what we do."

Simon's company, SubZero, has invested quite heavily in new equipment which will help make our production more efficient for Chapman's retail and wholesale customers.

John Mingay, who has worked as a consultant for the Chapman family since the 1990s, has been instrumental in building this exciting new chapter. "I have worked with both Chapman's and SubZero for the last few years, and with the father's business before that, so I know what the potential could be if the two companies were to merge," he explains.

At the time of discussions, SubZero had just moved into a new purpose-built factory unit – with room and resources to spare. "Their intention is to use their bigger financial clout and the technical expertise they've developed over the years to grow Chapman's while keeping family values at its core," says John. Chapman's will have a separate unit within the SubZero factory, so while the business will have access to SubZero's sizeable resources it will be run as a separate business with its own kitchen and team.

A boon for fine food retailers

A family so steeped in fish knowledge and experience is a high value proposition for speciality retailers, who are set to benefit from the new iteration of Chapman's. "The intention is to build on all the things that are good about Chapman's but add in some efficiencies, production formats and up-to-date equipment," says John, "so that it's able to service its customers even better than it has been doing for nearly 20 years."

Exciting new flavours are on the horizon, but the traditional products that have earned Chapman's a well-loved place in *Speciality Food* readers' chiller cabinets are not going anywhere. "We have a traditional customer base who enjoy the classic flavours and formats we've been producing for years, and we have no plans to diminish that, but with our extra capacity we're excited to experiment with some new options to tempt younger consumers," Kevin says.

This is far from a 'buy a fine food brand for its credentials then knock down quality but not price' situation. "Chapman's products and quality won't change – we will add to them and make them better," Kevin concludes.

> "The intention is to build on all the things that are good about Chapman's but add in some efficiencies so that it's able to service its customers even better than it has been doing for nearly 20 years"





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DARTS FARM

Warm hospitality, smart product curation and a community ethos come together to form this undisputable destination for fine food lovers

The very best independent retailers skillfully combine the arts of warm hospitality and retail prowess, and support their local economy and communities, and Darts Farm sits firmly in this category. Now a food lovers' haven, the shop and restaurant are must-visit destinations in their own right – despite, or maybe as a result of, its humble beginnings. Still very much a family business, with the hospitality headed up by next generation, George Dart.

"My grandfather, Ronald, planted the seed by pioneering an innovative pick your own business in 1971," George begins. "Long before it became fashionable, he believed in selling produce direct to the consumer and eating seasonally and locally." Thankfully, this ethos of doing simple things well was handed down to the next generation. "When he passed away in 1982, my dad and uncles continued his legacy by evolving a small hut on the side of the road into Darts Farm as you know it today."

The next generation built on the philosophy, and are still at the helm of the business today. "The retail, lifestyle and hospitality business was dreamt up and built by my dad and uncle James, with their brother Paul looking after the farming operation," George explains.

Creating a community

"Everything has been built on core values of championing local farmers and artisan producers while being imbedded in our local community," says George. The destination retailer is a valuable asset to the local economy, too: "Today we directly employ around 250 people (with another 150 jobs on-site) and welcome 17,000 people through the doors each week."

The Darts Farm mission is at once invaluable and down-to-earth. "Our mission is to connect local people with local produce, championing a dynamic local economy, resilient small supply chain and vibrant community, and sustaining our cultural heritage, environment and landscape," says George. This ethos has certainly served the team well, and the underlying plan to "bring people together over good food and drink, fostering meaningful connections with warm hospitality and genuine care" has been incredibly well received by both locals and visiting shoppers.

Standing apart from the crowd

This community ethos is proving successful for the Darts Farm team, as it creates a tangible comradery for all to enjoy. "It is the experience that sets us apart, from a warm welcome and delicious tastings on welcome, to the buzz around the food hall and eateries delivered by our amazing team," says George.

The very real excitement the team has for what they do is visible to everyone who enters the site. "Everywhere that you go there are people with a real passion for what they do and plenty of foodie knowledge to share; from our master butchers who are on hand to offer advice on the best cuts, from nose to tail, to our cheesemongers who can recommend British farmhouse cheese and charcuterie that is tasting best during a particular season."

Skillful stocking

Darts Farm's plentiful customers return again and again for its perfectly curated range of food and drink, which not only supports the local food economy but also offers a unique selection for its discerning customers to choose from. "The food hall champions homegrown, local food, artisan products, low food-miles, eating with the seasons, wellness and sustainable practices," explains George. "We probably have one of the most diverse selections of artisan products in the country, it's not just about the final product, but incredible ingredients too."

Local suppliers are well represented. "We work with over 250 suppliers from here in the West Country, and are constantly on the lookout for new and exciting products." Trends don't trump quality and craftmanship, though. "Even when looking for new products, we stick to our values and source food and drink crafted using traditional methods, minimal ingredients and amazing quality. In a world that is over-processed, we're striving for the opposite!"

Primed for success

Like businesses across the food sector – and beyond – the team at Darts Farm has weathered more than its fair share of crises. "We seem to be in a state of perpetual crisis, from Covid to the Ukraine war with sky high energy prices, labour shortages and now a disastrous government budget," says George. Being part of the fine food industry offers light at the end of the tunnel, though, as well as a skillset which makes the business primed for success whatever the challenges it faces. "The beauty of our industry is that we are resilient and able to adapt to the onslaught of challenges thrown our way," he continues. "It's hard work, but makes us better in the long run!"

In fact, Darts Farm has just won yet another award to add to its bulging trophy cabinet. "We've just won UK's Best Farm Shop for a record fourth time," says George, "which is testament to the relentless hard work, dedication and passion shown by our team. Our people are what makes our business special and we couldn't be prouder of them."

Dedicated and passionate staff, conscientious product curation and a quality-first ethos; no wonder Darts Farm is delighting foodies in its native West Country and beyond.







> Our mission is to connect local people with local produce, championing a dynamic local economy, resilient small supply chain, vibrant community and sustaining our cultural heritage, environment and landscape



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TRENDS FROM THE TOP

Guy Tullberg, MD of Tracklements, runs us through the tastiest trends he's seeing right now

SAY CHEESE

Whether mainstream or artisan, our love affair with British cheeses continues to grow. The Knowledge Bank puts cheese as a weekly household staple by 80% of UK shoppers and social media has helped to draw attention, and sales, to both artisan producers and decades old staples.

UK cheese offers a dynamic growth opportunity. Everyone is discovering their favourites to put on a cheeseboard or grazing board. This has resulted in an uptick in awareness around companions for cheese, whether that's a style of hummus, or a particular brand of olives or a favourite relish. Both Fresh Chilli Jam and Onion Marmalade are benefitting from this trend. 38% of ABC1 shoppers use Fresh Chilli Jam with a cheese board [Source: Blue Marble Research].

Rediscovering the art of using food to bring people together and create community. Supper parties amongst the over 25s are re-emerging in the UK which means that traditional condiments which are thought of as cuisine specific are enjoying the spotlight. My 30-something daughters are more likely to have friends over for a beautifully crafted casual supper than meet in a restaurant. Mexican themed nights with friends featuring Sweet Pepper Relish for example or Indian Mango Chutney to accompany a homemade curry night. This is also giving hosts the opportunity to get creative with 'twists on traditional' and their individual style for using condiments.

TAKING DECISION MAKING OUT OF TONIGHT'S SUPPER

The budget squeeze means that shoppers are spending money upgrading home meals rather than eating out. Shoppers are looking for restaurant quality at home and 'dinner for tonight' solutions. Consumer mission merchandising (i.e. steak, thick cut chips, an artisan mustard, red wine) makes that really easy for the shopper, creating an easy upsell for retailers.

LITTLE, AFFORDABLE LUXURIES

Shoppers are levelling up comfort foods by using more premium condiments. Those parts of the meal that aren't made at home are being upgraded; like our Rich & Creamy Mayonnaise for a homemade pizza. If consumers are going to spend time cooking a meal from scratch to make it the best, they want to serve something really special alongside it. Most condiments take a long time to make which makes them unlikely as an everyday make, so buying premium makes sense. In our latest quant research 67% of ABC1 shoppers are looking for ways to make staple meals more varied.



GETTING THE GOURMET TREATMENT

Ambient brands are getting the gourmet treatment by being elevated with premium ingredients and posh packaging. Shoppers are looking more at ambient aisles as the long shelf life of canned goods are cost effective and convenient. We're seeing glass being used to premiumise packaging in many categories. Tracklements have always been available in glass which is 30% recycled and, unlike plastic, is infinitely recyclable without degradation.

INGREDIENTS AND FUNCTIONAL FOOD

61% of shoppers are scratch-cooking to reduce the amount of ultra processed foods they are eating. [Source: *Waitrose Food & Drink Report*]. Shoppers are also looking for functional foods that offer benefits outside of their nutritional value – which is why talking about the health benefits of mustard, for example, helps boost its sales. Indeed, we have a blog about this on our website!

REIMAGINING THE CLASSICS

We're seeing shoppers 25+ finding products from the archives and using them in new and imaginative ways thanks to social media driven trends – cottage cheese for example or the rediscovery of Guinness! Because of social media, these trends transcend borders which means that we all have access to global flavours and new uses for traditional ingredients. This is great news for classics like Strong Horseradish Cream and Robust Wholegrain Mustard as well as providing a window onto the myriad uses for hot sauces – like our fermented Sriracha Chilli Sauce.



38% OF ABC1 SHOPPERS USE FRESH CHILLI JAM WITH A CHEESE BOARD

SOURCE: BLUE MARBLE RESEARCH

LUNCHES AND LEFTOVERS

There's a swell of interest around work lunches: making affordable and interesting lunches whether that's batch cooking or using leftovers. Meal planning for the week is flourishing with consumers making the basis for many meals and using condiments to add versatility and a point of daily difference.

CONDIMENT TRENDS FROM ACROSS THE FINE FOOD SECTOR

Table sauces are the most everyday condiment, and 74% of ABC1 shoppers use them once a week or more at home. Chutneys and relishes feature most with a cheeseboard, with 44% of consumers saying this is how they're most frequently eaten. Mustards and hot sauces play similar roles as ingredients to make standard meals interesting – 44% of people are using mustard as an ingredient.

> "We're seeing shoppers 25+ finding products from the archives and using them in new and imaginative ways thanks to social media driven trends"

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PRODUCT NEWS

Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Dressings brand expands sauce collection

Lucy's Dressings has added to its popular range of award-winning dressings and mayonnaises with a selection of high-quality table sauces, made with the best natural ingredients – from free-range eggs and Cotswold Gold cold-pressed extra virgin rapeseed oil to Cotswold butter.



The range includes Bearnaise Sauce (with Dijon mustard, lemon, shallots and tarragon), Burger Sauce (with beech-smoked rapeseed oil, gherkins, pickled onions, Dijon, roasted peppers, tomatoes, dill and cayenne), and Marie Rose (enhanced with cider vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, tomato, and tabasco and cayenne chillies). Completing the line-up are Hollandaise Sauce, Hot Mango Chutney, and Tartare Sauce.

lucysdressings.co.uk

Meaty new flavour from Burts

Burts has launched new Herb Roasted Chicken flavour crisps, just in time for the spring/summer picnic season. Part of the core range, and available in 40g and 150g packs, the new product taps into consumer desire for 'meaty' flavours in snacking, and is made using real Creedy Carver chicken, balanced with sage, parsley, rosemary and thyme for an authentic taste.



Sas Horscroft, head of marketing at Burts Snacks, said, "With chicken consistently being the top savoury meat profile for spring summer launches in the UK over the past three years, we anticipate strong demand for this new flavour. The combination of herbs and roasted chicken will not only meet the expectations of existing customers, but also attract new ones, driving sales and expanding our reach."

burtschips.com



Fudge Kitchen taps into appetite for nostalgia

Award-winning confectioner Fudge Kitchen has unveiled a new range which celebrates classic British flavours.

The new collection brings together Rock Salted Peanut Brittle, Raspberry Coconut Ice, Vanilla Crumbly Fudge and Salted Caramel Crumbly Fudge.

The four-strong range is designed to remind customers of the simple, nostalgic pleasures of the past without compromise. Each product is handmade hsing organic dairy and British sugar, contains no preservatives, and is packaged in FSC-certified boxes, printed with plant-based inks and sealed using water-based adhesives.

Richard Parson, managing director of Fudge Kitchen, said, "We're excited to share this range responding to a growing customer demand for confectionery that celebrates quality, nostalgia and tradition, aligning with the core values that have been honed during our forty-year legacy. Whilst the range has tradition at its centre, it's been reimagined for the conscious consumer, where every bite also supports ethical and sustainable practices."

fudgekitchen.co.uk

Trending flavour joins Lost Sheep RTD family



Lost Sheep has extended its RTD canned coffee range with a new speciality-grade Iced Caramel Latte, made by coffee roasters and 100% traceable to origin.

The ambient, VAT-free drink (with tasting notes of milk and butterscotch) is crafted with the brand's award-winning Get To The Hopper coffee – a carefully sourced blend of Colombian and Brazilian Arabica beans.

Made with skimmed milk and less sugar than its competitors, the drink comes in at under 80 calories per can. Lost Sheep Coffee founder, Stuart Wilson, says these products, "are the only RTD coffee cans on the market to offer 100% coffee traceability from origin to can. There is simply no other brand that can match us in terms of coffee quality and traceability."

lostsheepcoffee.com

Cumbrian spirits producer introduces G&T cans

Award-winning Cumbrian small batch distiller, Shed One Distillery, has expanded into the RTD market with a premium gin and tonic serve – Fancy Frolic.

Co-owner, Zoe Arnold-Bennett, said, "The RTD market is a natural progression for us, and we see it as another way of getting more people to know who we are, where we are, and what we do."

The brand's Fancy Frolic artisan gin, with notes of ginger, lime, strawberry and elderflower, is combined with Cumbrian Tonic Water (created exclusively for the business by Mawson's) in the 250ml serve, coming in at 6.5% ABV. A low-calorie option is also available.

shed1distillery.com



COTSWOLD FAYRE
Making a difference through fine food

Taste the latest products, see brand new innovations, and meet some of Cotswold Fayre's fantastic suppliers at Farm Shop & Deli Show 2025!

We can't wait to meet our new and existing customers, so make sure you come along to our pavilion at **Stand H201**.

FARM SHOP & DELI SHOW 7-9 APRIL 2025 NEC BIRMINGHAM

KOOKY PRETTY UNIQUE FRUIT
Bower Collective
turtle Better Breakfast
DIDDLY SQUAT FARM
No Fairytales

First ever multi serve plant-based matcha released

Califia Farms has brought to market the first ever ready-to-drink multi serve Matcha Almond Latte. Available in 750ml bottles and with a base of creamy almond milk combined with real matcha green tea powder, the drink is subtly sweet and velvety smooth. It's also unflavoured, allowing consumers to customise the latte with their favourite syrup.

The drink taps into growing interest globally in plant-based alternatives to coffee shop favourites, said UK and EU general manager, Damien Threadgold.

"Our mission remains clear: to make plant-based living easy and accessible for everyone. We're constantly innovating to meet the evolving needs of our consumers, while remaining true to our core values of health, taste, and sustainability."

califiafarms.com





Crosta Mollica showcases eyecatching brand refresh

One of the UK's fastest growing pizza brands, Crosta Mollica, has recently undergone a brand refresh, starting with its range of chilled and frozen pizzas. The new look and feel reinforces the brand's authentic Italian credentials, while driving home the messaging of the quality of ingredients used.

David Milner, Crosta Mollica's executive chairman, said, "One of the primary objectives of undergoing such a momentous brand refresh is to make the name more memorable – we want to be more than 'the one with the stripes'. Those who already enjoy Crosta Mollica pizzas never look back, so it's about us saying to shoppers 'This is us'. We are focused and committed to maintaining everything which is so incredibly good about the brand – our Italian heritage, the quality, the taste, the heart and passion – and using our packaging to really shout about it."

crostamollica.com

Fresh look for Pure Maple

British-Canadian brand, Pure Maple, has showcased new branding alongside an organic certified range of 100% pure maple syrups.

Founder and partner, Robert Ward, said, "We are excited to bring our newly organic maple syrups to the UK market at such a compelling price. We understand that consumers are looking for value without compromising on quality, and we're proud to offer a product that meets the demand for premium foods at an accessible price point."

The new organic range includes Pure Maple's Golden Delicate, Amber Rich and Dark Robust syrups, while the rebrand offers a fresh, modern look, and a new Leone bottle shape, paying homage to the rich history of Canadian maple syrup.

puremaple.co.uk



New frozen pizza base ranges from Rich's

Foodservice operators can grab a larger slice of the pizza market thanks to a new range of authentic Italian parbaked frozen bases from Rich's.

These include 10" and 12" thin crust gluten-free bases, and a 10" cauliflower base enhanced with milled chia seeds and brown rice.

Hand-stretched, light-textured and rustic Pinsa, fermented overnight, are also on the menu, made with extra virgin olive oil for added flavour. These are available in 9" and 12" rounds, with other shapes and sizes available. All products require no thawing – just top and bake.



Rich's commercial director, Dez Paterson, said, "These launches come at a time when the out-of-home pizza market is in a particularly strong position. The market is now worth £3.2 billion and is growing at 3.6% year on year."

richs.co.uk

Exciting innovation from leading meringue brand

Flower & White, renowned for its indulgent, low-calorie meringue bars, has unveiled a new launch, perfect for helping consumers to create easy, simple desserts.

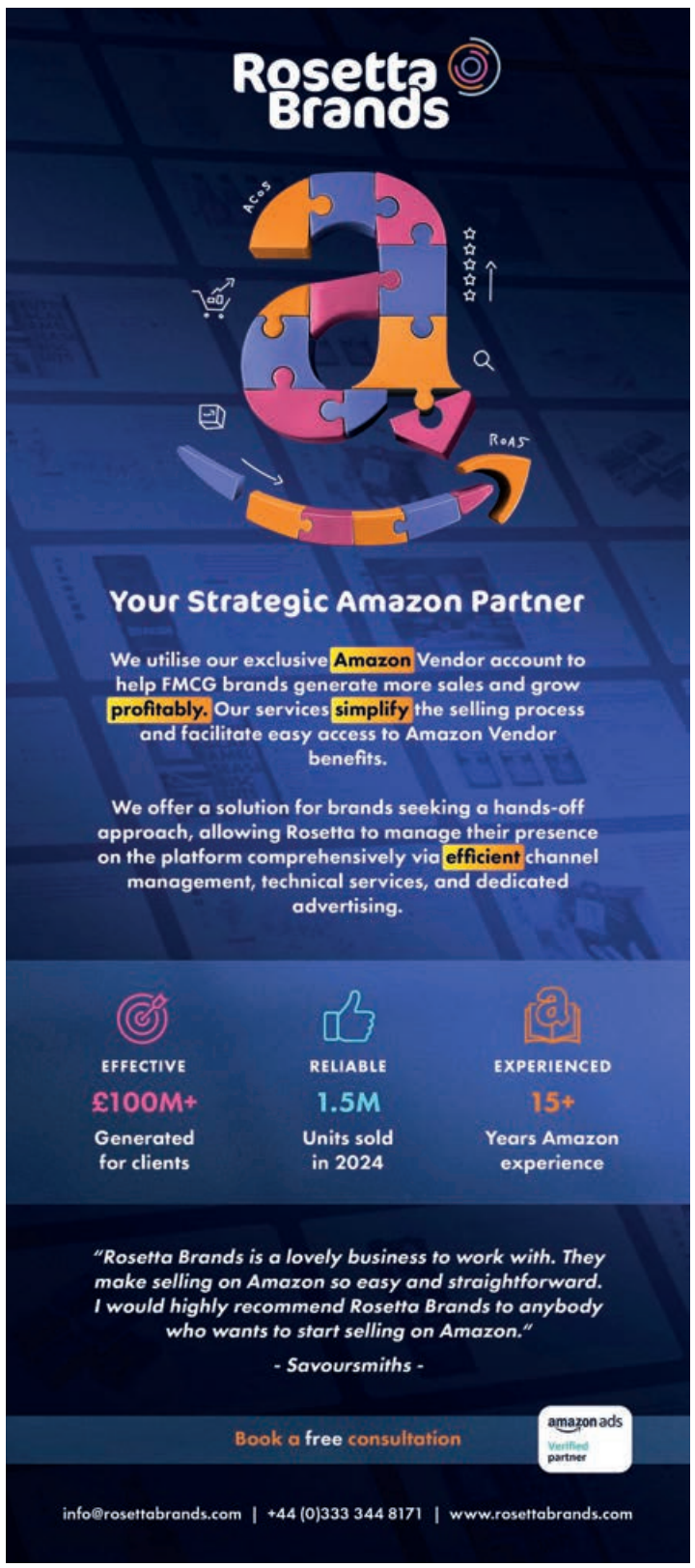
The Glorious Mess is a bold new brand from Brian and Leanne Crowther, celebrating puddings. It includes all-new Strawberry Meringue Nests and Caramel Meringue nests alongside already popular favourites like Meringue Clouds and Kisses.

"Our mission is simple," said Leanne. "We exist to create uplifting moments of joy that bring people together, whether it's a quick midweek treat or a showstopping summer dessert. The Glorious Mess makes it effortless to share great food and even better memories."



Each product is made with the finest ingredients, including British sugar and free-range eggs, and is handcrafted in the brand's award-winning Shropshire bakery. The all-natural range is gluten-free and suitable for vegetarians.

theglorioussmess.co.uk



ARTISAN PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Here's just a few of the products to see at Artisan Food & Drink Expo:

- **Melie Oü** will present their recently developed Speciality Herbal Tea, inspired by primitive Nordic nature and dedicated to customers who adore the might of forests. The teas are simple but full of flavours and have different beneficial herbs within it, including nettle and juniper berry.
- **Kawa Comercio Sostenible** will showcase Specialty Coffee Mystic Brew. Experience quality and sustainability in every cup. Bourbon Rosado delights with floral notes and subtle sweetness, while Bourbon Sidra offers vibrant acidity and exotic fruits.
- **House of Chocolate** will present its Almond Mylk Chocolate Covered Strawberries. The crunchy strawberry texture is combined with a rich cacao bean flavour. Like all House of Chocolate products, this is suitable for those following vegan, raw, and gluten-free diets.
- **KULT Kefir** will present its KULT water kefir – a natural health elixir brewed in Belgium. Low in sugar and organic, this Kefir offers a natural energy boost without all the nasties. Think of it as a delicate iced tea with a subtle smokiness.
- **Turtle Cereals** will launch their Cinnamon Bites at the show. The Cinnamon Bites are organic, vegan and made of Wholegrains (rich in fibres) with 30% less sugar. Full of vitamin E, gluten-free and no palm-oil.
- **BioHoney** will exhibit their Honey & Honeycomb range of Premium Organic Honey – pure, raw and unfiltered. Sustainably harvested from Bulgaria's pristine mountainous regions, these diverse, unpolluted landscapes allow the bees to produce honey that is free from pesticides, chemicals, and artificial additives.



NATURAL FOOD EXPO 2025

At Excel this May, Natural Food Expo continues its legacy of championing natural and organic innovation

Sustainability, natural, and organic products have made significant strides in the world of specialty food and drink. As conscious consumerism continues to evolve, it is vital for retailers and foodservice professionals to stay informed about new products, emerging trends, and market opportunities.

For 29 years, the Natural Food Expo – part of the Natural & Organic Products Expo (NOPEX) – has been at the forefront of this movement, providing an essential platform to discover the latest innovations in natural and organic food and drink.

Event organisers Diversified UK & Europe have officially opened visitor registration for Natural Food Expo, which will take place on Monday 12th and Tuesday 13th May at Excel London. Attendees can explore a whole raft of speciality food and drink – including natural ingredients, fine foods, healthy snacks, free from delicacies, sustainable brands, and plant-based innovations.

Georgina Baker, event director, says, "Our long-established event has helped harness the growth of natural, organic and sustainable products for over 29 years, and so we're thrilled to announce registration is now open for 2025. This year's edition of Natural Food Show is raising the bar with new international pavilions, a dynamic start-up zone, inspiring talks and an exciting addition – The Artisan Food & Drink Expo. If you're a retailer or buyer passionate about sourcing planet-positive brands, we can't wait to see you on 12th -13th May!"

The show promises to serve up a delicious mix of products from start-ups to globally recognised names. Exhibitors confirmed include Suma Wholefoods, Clearspring, Doves Farm Foods, The Coconut Co, Gusto Organic, English Tea Shop, Mr Organic – and many more. As well as UK exhibitors, the show brings an international appeal with pavilions from Italy, Poland, North America, ITC – International Trade Centre (with brands from Pakistan), and for the first time Sri Lanka.





NEW for 2025: Artisan Food and Drink Expo

The Artisan Food and Drink Expo will debut as part of The Natural Food Expo, offering a dedicated platform for brands that champion provenance, high-quality ingredients, and unique curation. This specialised area within the expo will provide retailers, buyers and foodservice professionals with the opportunity to discover and source exceptional products that resonate with their conscious customers. Brands to see here include: Sucseed, Melie Oü, Drylaw, Gallo di Luce, Chill Spritz, Kult Kefir, Turtle Cereals, House of Chocolate, Biohoney and many more.

Georgina Baker says, "After witnessing the participation of countless exceptional brands at The Natural Food Expo over the years, we recognised the perfect moment to introduce The Artisan Food and Drink Expo as a distinct showcase within the event. This dedicated space will elevate the profile of artisanal producers and allow buyers to explore a diverse range of distinctive food and drink offerings."

New products, new launches

A major draw for visitors is discovering the latest brands making their debut. The Food Launchpad Zone will showcase groundbreaking startups and bold challenger brands disrupting the market. Brands to see here include Marpe Organics, Granola Fan Club, J Wilson Food Service, Patterfly, Guru World Food and Spices, RawQFoods, Veg Kingdom, House of Chocolate, Forty Thieves, The 44 Group (Omoss), and Superkeen.

Superkeen launched at the show last year and will return for 2025. Caragh Keane, owner of Superkeen says,

"Natural Food Expo was our first food event and receiving an Innovation Award was the cherry on top. We were overwhelmed by the great feedback last year and met a wide range of people – from independents to Whole Foods Market UK. As a start-up, the show gave us more opportunities than anywhere else."

Beyond the Launchpad Zone, the shows popular 'Innovation Showcase' is the ultimate destination for discovering products launched in the last 12 months. Here visitors can vote for their favourite products to win an innovation award, which will be announced to exhibitors on the end of day one.

Vegan World

Natural Food Expo will also see the return of Vegan World - the one-stop-shop for plant-based food and drink innovations. Still a major part of retail, Vegan World will present a range of brands championing free-from, ethical and sustainable processes. See innovations from Ariela's Gelato, Liberation Foods, Opalbound Nutrition, Healthy Crunch, EverTrust, Azamet Pro, Windmill Organics, Snacksy, Leipomo Rosten, Onesimum, London Nootropics, and others.

Food and drink experts take to the stage

Beyond the show floor, visitors will be able to engage in two days of thought-provoking discussions across two theatres. Access expert insights and be inspired by trend-led panels in a free-to-attend seminar programme. Topics range from industry reports to the latest food and drink trends, organic farming and successful retailing tips, plus The Soil Association will be back revealing the results from their popular annual *Organic Market Report*.









REGISTER FOR A FREE TRADE TICKET

Natural Food Expo (co-located with Natural Health Expo and Natural Beauty Expo) forms Natural & Organic Products Expo – the definitive trade show leading the natural and organic sector for 29 years. The show will take place 12th-13th May at Excel London. To register for a free trade ticket, please visit **naturalfoodexpo.co.uk** or scan the QR Code below:

> "Attending NOPEX is important, it's how we understand what's out there. We spend so much time glued to our screens, so it's nice to interact with brands face to face. This is the place for innovation, there's loads of products and brands here I haven't heard of before and some that I'm familiar with, so there's something for everyone"
>
> **OLIVER CHADWYK-HEALEY, BRANDED INNOVATION MANAGER AT WAITROSE & PARTNERS**

natural food EXPO
FEATURING ARTISAN FOOD & DRINK EXPO
12-13 May 2025 | Excel London

"Attending NOPEX is how we understand what's out there. There are loads of products and brands here so there's something for everyone. It is the place for innovation!"
Waitrose

The Definitive Trade Event for **Natural, Organic** and **Speciality** F&B

If you're a delicatessen, farm shop, retail, hospitality or foodservice buyer, there is no better place to visit.

You'll find a huge a range of exciting new food & drink product launches to get your tastebuds tingling.



REGISTER FOR YOUR **FREE TRADE TICKET**

PART OF natural & organic PRODUCTS EXPO
naturalfoodexpo.co.uk
#NOPEX
Organised by diversified



SAVOUR NORTHERN FRANCE

The regions of Normandy and Hauts-de-France are rich sources of fine food perfectly tailored to speciality retailers

France is renowned for its cuisine, but dig a little deeper and you'll find that each region can easily hold its own culinary crown – particularly the Northern areas of Normandy and Hauts-de-France, where history, provenance and traditional expertise meet with modern palates and techniques to deliver world-class flavours.

The food businesses within these regions are blessed with a plentiful supply of fine quality produce created by local farmers, and together with the romantic landscapes in which they reside the opportunity for storytelling is rich. Provenance and the use of traditional, highly-skilled production methods are highly valued in these areas – as they are by Speciality Food readers – so the opportunity for the British fine food industry is clear.

Consider too the short distance between the UK and these great French regions; not only does this ensure speed and efficiency in terms of the supply chain – these regions are Britain's closest overseas neighbours – but also means that the carbon footprint is minimal. The same is true of many of the farmers and suppliers that work with the region's producers; by sourcing locally, the producers not only support their local economies and the livelihoods of the suppliers within it, but they also keep their environmental impact down.

Indeed, many of the producers of the region have sustainability at their heart and have a keen commitment to ethical production – as well as a pride in their regional identity and larder.

Health of people and planet

With health concerns being a key driver in the decision-making process of British consumers, retailers will be excited to learn that Northern France has a number of producers raring to support the wellbeing of their customers.

Cider vinegar brand Archie is one such example. By sourcing French apples farmed using ecologically-sound methods to create its bottles of unfiltered cider vinegar, the Archie team has created a highly versatile product that sits as well within store cupboard shelves as an ingredient as it does as a wellness-booster. In fact, Archie has turned the fate of apple cider vinegar on its head; traditionally used in cooking, since launch its founders have passionately championed its additional health benefits. They have created two new goodness-packed products to cater to the growing demand for food-as-medicine: single-serve bottles of Matin Detox and Good Night to bookend a healthy day.

Similarly, Biofair Nutrition's range of organic bars, snacks, cereals and versatile powders are making the realms of functional on-the-go eating more attractive than ever before thanks to its sustainable methodology. Rather than being packed full of unpronounceable ingredients, as so many of its counterparts are, this range is made using nutrient-rich natural ingredients which are simple and unprocessed. Plus, sustainability is a key driver for the business – they are committed to sourcing, producing and packaging their range sustainably, for example by rigorously selecting raw materials according to their organic production and sourcing 80% of their ingredients from France (and 50% from Normandy) – so that health-seeking consumers do not need to sacrifice the health of the planet in the quest towards wellness.

British consumers are busier than ever, but all too often convenience can come at the price of quality. Thankfully, Bo'Co Fabrik has the answer: attractive glass jars filled with authentically French ready-to-eat dishes such as duck parmentier, seafood rice and hake with fresh vegetables, as well as modern classics including mac and cheese, made using ingredients sourced from the local area for a true taste of Northern France – and more delicious recipes are in the pipeline. These chef-quality products mean that shoppers don't need to sacrifice nutrition when they are time-poor, instead they can indulge in traditional French classics within minutes. Shipped frozen and retailed chilled for optimum freshness, Bo'Co Fabrik offer fine food consumers an optimum – and affordable – way to eat restaurant-level food in the comfort of their homes, via their most trusted retailers.

Quenching the thirst for better

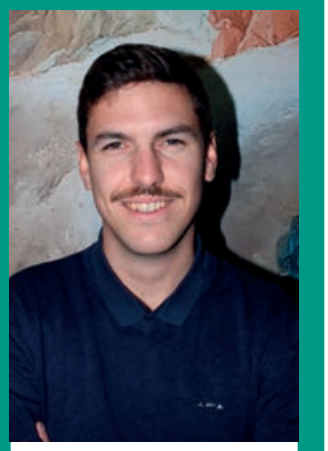
Craft beer is quenching British consumers' thirsts like never before and its popularity is set to rise, so a business like Brasserie Duyck – an independent French brewery with a heritage dating







PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT



Paul Jaffré, directeur général of traditional bakery Savary, tells the story behind his taste of France

My mission is to give folks bread and pastries they can trust, made with care. No shortcuts, no weird additives – just honest craftsmanship. I'm all about French-first sourcing, because quality starts with knowing your suppliers. When I work directly with farmers and producers, I get to support the kind of agriculture I believe in – sustainable, ethical, and rooted in our terroir.

We're baking the French way. Think classic recipes, elevated with premium ingredients. Our flan? We keep it simple. 100% grandma-style: raw milk from Thomas Bocquet's farm down the road, eggs from free-roaming hens, and a pinch of sugar. No fancy techniques, no golden crusts – just the simplicity your great-grandma would recognize. Our bread? Pure sourdough tradition – slow-fermented, crusty, and full of flavour. We let the ingredients speak for themselves. When you bite into our baguette, you're tasting butter from Normandy, flour from Picardy, and a whole lot of French passion.

> "When you bite into our baguette, you're tasting butter from Normandy, flour from Picardy, and a whole lot of French passion"

back to 1922 – is in prime position to satisfy fine food customers this summer and beyond. The business is rich in provenance and history whilst catering for modern tastes; as well as offering low-alcohol options, it produces legendary brews such as Jenlain Biere de Garde, all of which reflect generations of time-honoured knowledge and skills as well as the rich terroir of its region.

No fine food retailer is complete without heritage- and flavour-packed spirits, and Ergaster has both in droves. Master distiller Herve Grangeon has honed his craft over 25 years, and distils organic Haut-de-France barley in copper pot stills for the brand's aromatic and complex whisky, catering to the British shopper's thirst for small-batch spirits crafted by hand. Herve's gin is also particularly special, having been made using handpicked wild juniper berries for optimum storytelling opportunities.

Clean-label, health-boosting and fully organic products tick a lot of boxes for today's UK consumer, and Madame Green offers all this and more. This award-winning range of fruit and spice concentrates are deliciously versatile – position them on your spirits shelves to add flavour and nutrition to your customers' cocktail-making, or simply mix into sparkling water or fruit juice for an alcohol-free option which offers an energy boost without caffeine, sugar or additives.

Satisfying sweet tooths – without sacrifice

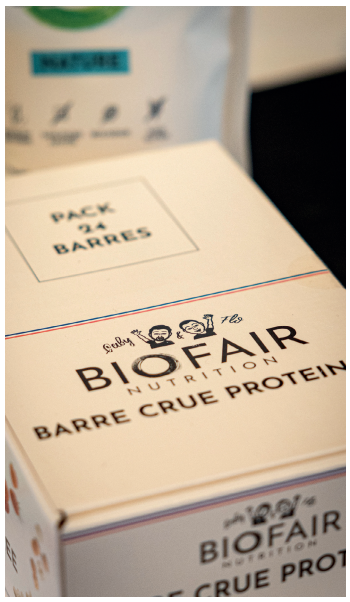
British shoppers adore fine quality chocolate, and Normandy and Hauts-de-France have an array of delicacies for them to indulge in. Chevaliers d'Argouges is a proudly artisanal producer of quality chocolate which sources only 100% pure cocoa butter and Fairtrade chocolate, allowing everyone to benefit from its varied and sumptuous range.

The term 'bean-to-bar' is highly prized in the world of chocolate, and the team at Encuentro are proud to be purveyors of fully-traceable award-winning chocolate – from ethically-run cocoa farms around the world to shelf via expert production. Supporting local communities is key to their mission, as is using responsible packaging on the full Encuentro range, to ensure that fine food retailers can offer their customers exceptional chocolate products without surrendering ethical credentials.











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LINKEDIN: Business France UK **INSTAGRAM:** @businessfrance_uk_irl



"At Business France, we are passionate about unearthing France's best producers and introducing them to British retailers seeking something truly special for their customers. Our unique position allows us to identify emerging trends and exceptional quality that can give UK stockists a competitive edge. Whether you're looking to enhance your range or discover regional specialities from France, we're your dedicated partners in bringing these extraordinary finds to British plates"

PAULINE GAUTHIER, HEAD OF FOOD, DRINKS AND AGRIFOODTECH AT BUSINESS FRANCE UK & IRELAND

PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT

Delphine Rochefort, owner of Maison Rochefort, talks us through her business's savoir-faire

The team and I are motivated by creating artisanal good products from France using selected ingredients, savoir-faire and lots of heart. The founder of the company created our speciality: the Patience biscuit. This biscuit is delicious with an ice cream, a tea, a coffee, and then the long version, with one side coated in chocolate, is perfect with champagne or whisky. In addition to this flagship product, we have other delicious biscuits with or without butter, as well as chocolates and confectionery.

Our location allows us to select carefully our ingredients from Normandy whenever possible – for example, butter, flour, salted butter caramel etc are produced a few kilometres from our company – and our products reflect a balance of flavours, sweet but just right, with the finesse of tastes to be discovered from start to finish. Our ingredients, carefully selected, make our range delicious and really tasty



"Our location allows us to select carefully our ingredients from Normandy whenever possible – for example, butter, flour, salted butter caramel etc are produced a few kilometres from our company"

BUYERS' INSIGHT

In February, Business France brought together producers and buyers to welcome conscientious producers of fine quality food and drink to the British fine food industry. At this seated afternoon tea event, held at the awe inspiring French Embassy, the panel were able to experience the products in person.



Sole Nasi, brand guardian of the Fresh Pasta Company, explains why the regions of Normandy and Haute-de-France offer a wealth of opportunities to the UK speciality food market

What excited us most about the businesses at the Business France event was their exceptional dedication to quality and craftsmanship. Each brand showcased not only outstanding flavours but also a strong commitment to both tradition and innovation.

I believe customers would be particularly drawn to the authenticity and premium nature of these products. Whether it's the rich complexity of Archie Cider Vinegar, the comforting and artisanal touch of Bo'Co Fabrik's homemade meals, the refined chocolate experience from Chocolate Encuentro, or the delicate, indulgent custard tart from Maison Savary – there's something special for every palate.

As for their potential in the UK market, I see a strong opportunity for these businesses to thrive. British consumers are increasingly seeking high-quality and sustainably produced foods, and these brands align perfectly with that trend. With the right positioning and distribution, they could attract a loyal audience eager to explore these exceptional products.

"I believe customers would be particularly drawn to the authenticity and premium nature of these products"



Tudor Evans, head of commercial at Holleys Fine Foods, believes that speciality French products can prove valuable in the UK's fine food and drink sphere

At Holleys, we import a range of French products so our customers recognise and appreciate authenticity – which the businesses on show at this event certainly demonstrated – and I can confirm that there is a strong appetite within the fine food and drink sector for genuine French and Continental products.

The smaller scale and family-run nature of these producers is also an attractive prospect as businesses like these are often able to offer flexibility and a willingness to tailor their ranges to our market.

A lot of these brands would work well as gifting options in our customers' stores; their format and packaging is attractive, which together with their sustainability credentials and authenticity mean that they would be a great fit for the UK speciality food sector.

"The packaging, sustainability and authenticity of these products mean that they would be a great fit for the UK's speciality food sector"



Stock up your customers' pantries with these store cupboard staples

1 GAROFALO
GLUTEN FREE PASTA

Specially formulated for those with coeliac disease, Garofalo Gluten Free Pasta delivers the authentic flavour and texture of 'normal' pasta. Customers tell us that it tastes just like the real thing! With 11 unique shapes in Garofalo's gluten-free range, from Farfalle and Linguine to Lasagne, offering both variety and great taste, ensuring that no one misses out on their favourite pasta shape.
pasta-garofalo.com

2 JOHN LUSTY
CHICKEN STOCK

The John Lusty brand has a long and distinguished British heritage, being the oldest soup and consommé brand in the UK with over 170 years of producing finest quality produce. The Chicken Stock is simmered with aromatic herbs and vegetables creating a rich, flavourful base that transforms any dish into a comforting culinary delight.
cottagedelight.co.uk

3 HAWKSHEAD RELISH
KETCHUPS

The Original Black Garlic Ketchup is THE condiment for the summer, packed with flavour and perfect for the BBQ, so much more than a table sauce. Hot Beetroot Ketchup has a fabulous hot pink colour and an subtle earthiness and warmth. Sriracha Ketchup completes the trio with a pickled sweet heat.
hawksheadrelish.com

4 DRIVERS PICKLES
CAPUCINE CAPERS

Drivers Pickles Capucine Capers offer a burst of briny sophistication, hand-picked and preserved in distilled white vinegar. These petite pearls elevate every dish from seafood to salads with their vibrant, zesty flavour. Ideal for gourmet kitchens and home cooks alike, they're a simple way to add depth, balance and flair to everyday dishes.
pickle-lovers.co.uk



5 BALLANCOURT
PÂTÉS

Ballancourt Fine Foods specialises in a wide range of quality French foods. All products can be provided with bespoke labelling at no extra charge and have the added benefit of long shelf life. The extensive range of ambient pâtés, terrines and rillettes is second to none with a variety of jar sizes to suit all needs.
ballancourt.co.uk

6 GARLIC FARM
SPECIALITY BUTTERS

Garlic Butter with Parsley, Thyme & Black Pepper is a mouth-watering combination of creamy butter with freshly crushed garlic cloves, herbs and black pepper, making the ultimate garlic bread. Oak Smoked Garlic Butter combines garlic, hot smoked over oak, with smooth butter – it will revolutionise your potatoes.
thegarlicfarm.co.uk

7 BANKHOEK CHILLI OIL
GARLIC OIL

Drizzle, savour, repeat. Elevate every dish with our award-winning, garlic-infused, Banhoek Chilli Oil. Our premium-quality chilli & garlic infused rapeseed oil is 100% natural and enhances the natural flavours of your food without overpowering them. It is also Halaal and Kosher certified, FSSC 22000 certified, and vegan friendly. Great on pizza, delicious on everything else!
banhoekchillioil.com

8 MATTHEWS COTSWOLD FLOUR
FLOUR

This 200-year-old family business is Britain's leading artisan flour mill, with the largest selection of speciality flour in the UK. The range includes Organic, Regenerative, Stoneground and Ancient Grains - with dedicated Pizza, Pasta, Pastry, Cake and Strong Bread Flours (and more). Milled to the highest quality to ensure the best baking results every time. Available in 1.5kg and 16kgs.
cotswoldflour.com





DARING TO DIVERSIFY

We travel to Kent, and Macknade, where the values of community and family remain at the core of everything the team does

Ten miles from Canterbury, perched on the edge of Faversham (an important creek town, which once jostled with traders from the surrounding area and Europe, transporting their wares up to London), is the hamlet of Macknade – which gives its name to one of Kent's leading food halls.

The evolution of Macknade, today operated by Stefano Cuomo and his management team, is both romantic, and inspirational. A story that reaches from the almond and olive groves of the Italian island of Ischia, to the cherry orchards and hop yards of the Garden of England.

Stefano's family have been farming the Macknade land since the mid-1800s. It's always been a productive, ever-changing dynamic. The family operated petrol stations 60 to 70 years ago. They were some of the first pioneers to print their farm name on trugs of produce delivered to London. They sold direct, as many others did, from the side of the road.

Where the story takes a twist from traditional agriculture is in the late 70s, when Stefano's mother Patricia, working in Italy as an au pair, met his father, Renato. The pair bonded. Over good food and wine. Her farming background. And his industrious nature, having grown up in a place where self-sufficiency wasn't some rural idyll inspired by a TV show, but a part of everyday life.

A time for change

Returning to Patricia's family farm, Renato found himself inspired to 'get stuck in', training in horticulture at Hadlow College and, in 1979, carving out his own niche, taking 20 acres of land adjacent to the main commercial operation, and springing forth a market garden. One ripe with possibilities. While it might have been apples or grain being grown up the road, Renato busied himself bringing more unusual, exotic (then) produce to customers, be it plump, bruise-coloured aubergines, or shallots.

"They were seeing a lot of farm diversification at the time," says Stefano. "This was a generation (my father was in his early 20s then), that was wanted to try something new, often looking at the American culture, where pick your own was growing at a pace. At the same time, we were starting to see this tradition of high-end chefs coming out of London and setting up restaurants, looking for great produce."

Renato would meet their demands, growing what they needed, little and often, and selling direct from a farm shack.

"That was 1979, the year I was born. My father very much just cracked on with it all and my mother supported him as was traditional in those days. She'd do the accounts, while he was out in the fields."

It was hard to make a living as they edged into the 80s, with a loss of interest in British farming at an alarming scale across the UK, and increased reliance from retailers on foreign imports.

"There was a kind of shift in society," Stefano continues, "all around how people were engaging with produce. My parents decided to grow the pick your own side of the business, looking as well as small scale producers and providing an outlet for them, while starting to source from other growers in the area."

As is the case with most diversification projects, there wasn't any defined plan at the beginning of this new era for Macknade. "They just had this absolute love for produce and for Kent and for the land, and community. All of these things are, I think, what makes agricultural businesses so important," Stefano urges.

"In regions like ours, so many people are touched by them. They know the name of the business, or have seen a signpost for them, or have an attachment to the farms after seeing the machinery out at cropping times. They've been a core part of many landscapes and areas for a long time."

Making a mark

Growing up on the farm, running around the land with his brother and sister, enjoying picnics amongst the cherry trees, Stefano says he has a deeply felt affection for farming and rural life... but also for family, and his strongly held values run through the offering of the business today. "I grew up recognising that family businesses should be a hub to support the next generation, but also the wider community."

The core of Macknade as a food hall grew during the 90s, when it exploded onto a burgeoning farm shop scene. Though it wasn't as easy as putting up a few shelves, loading them with jars of jam and welcoming shoppers through the door. "Planning officers didn't understand then the difference between the kind of quality produce we wanted to sell, and generic retail outlets. It would have been really frustrating for my parents," Stefano says.

Fortunately (and in part thanks to a prominent position close to an A road) success would follow Patricia and Renato in their bold new vision. "At the turn of the Millennium we stopped farming altogether," says Stefano, adding that the finances no longer made sense. "My grandfather was retiring, and the retail side of things were growing, we were cash generative, which certainly wasn't the case with agriculture."

Stefano joined the business in the early noughties, excitedly travelling Europe to find produce that aligned





with the shop's ethos for absolute deliciousness and quality, though it took a bit of convincing to get his father on board with some of his ideas. "He got frustrated by farmers' markets and farm shops not run by farmers. I had to tell him it was more about what we were growing as a business, and how we could differentiate. At that time we also saw the growth of wholesalers, and brands like Cottage Delight were quite small and coming through. There was a lot going on."

The most important thing about joining a family business, he says, is working out where you personally fit. Where you can add value. "I realised very early on that my parents had unwittingly crated this amazing lifestyle brand in Macknade. People had an emotional attachment to it. I saw a brilliant opportunity to build on that further, and part of that involved us moving to being a mission-focused business that, at its core, was about bringing the community together to enjoy incredible food and drink."

Making your mission work

Privately owned SMEs such as Macknade, Stefano says, create meaningful, stable jobs, and places where communities can be built... where customers and staff can build relationships. "We've got customers who've been shopping with us since before I was alive," he laughs. "They've watched me grow up. That's part of the magic of the independent shopping experience. Personalisation. Knowing who your customers are."

Alongside relationship building, a core value at Macknade is truly caring for the environment, but on this Stefano is realistic, saying Rome wasn't built in a day. "As an SME we're not going to solve the climate crisis by ourselves within a week, a month or even six months, but we can make strategic decisions that take us closer to our objectives. Whether that's looking more closely at the producers we choose to work with, at packaging, the way our site operates...even giving consumers reference points, such as understanding the difference between beef finished on grass, compared to soy. I genuinely think in small, incremental ways, we can be better, and we can help others be better in the way they eat and shop."

Futureproofing

There are two sides to innovation, says Stefano. One is getting in cool new 'big ticket' items, and expanding, perhaps your food and beverage options. The other is to act as almost a conduit between consumers and producers, platforming emerging brands. "More and more, rather than having wholesalers in for sampling, we're looking at businesses that might not be quite ready to come onto the shelves yet, but that could come and do some consumer testing with us in the form of pop-ups," he explains. "That way we can build dynamic relationships, and create an experience for shoppers, who are able to try something no one else has access to yet."

Anything 'new' has to push the business forward. For Stefano, futureproofing means regularly looking at trends emerging in the food and drink sphere, from wellbeing and the environment, to the economy. "One thing we're seeing at the moment," he reveals, "is younger people are unable to have big ticket items like a house, they're not affordable, but they're valuing experience and good food, and that might be where they spend their money. We need to nurture them." However, this shouldn't be to the detriment of existing, loyal customers. "Baby Boomers and 'the grey pound' continue to be important to businesses like ours. They are time-rich. They have more disposable income. We need to be more holistic, I think, taking the experiences of all age groups into consideration. A lot of the same values are shared across demographics. If you're delivering an experience, and people feel it's personalised and you're proactive, it doesn't matter if they're 25 or 75."

'Sincerity' is another thing Stefano thinks will keep food halls, delis and farm shops thriving into the future. "It's at the heart of everything, absolutely! It's that element of, cash can buy an experience, when it comes to the big boys, but it can't buy sincerity - recognising people, acknowledging them, remembering what they like, making recommendations you know they'll enjoy."

Knowledge is a speciality retail power too. During tricky economic times, we tend to shift our priorities when it comes to treating ourselves. Rather than an expensive weekend away, or a night at a fancy restaurant, Stefano says we're buying better quality cheese, for example, "and wanting to know more about where it's from, who made it and what wine to pair it with".

Finally, the 'whole basket shop' can be a dealbreaker. And as more, and younger, shoppers tune into what artisan stores have to offer, these retailers must have the bandwidth to meet their demands for not only experience and quality, but time, making sure all the essentials are readily available, from bread and milk to flour and sugar.

"People have to want to do their grocery shop with us. It's not enough for them to use us as a lovely place for breakfast at the weekend. We want them to come and buy Kentish-grown apples, or local beans. To make this work more efficiently and affordably in the future, those in the industry need to take a long hard look at margins and supply chains and longer-term strategies." Owners like himself are, says Stefano, in a position now to make an impact that will be felt in 10, 20 or even 30 years' time.

"We have a generation now," he explains, "of business owners who have 20 years behind them, and 20 more ahead. And some family members are coming out of farm retail businesses, opening up more opportunities. It's a massively dynamic time."



> "People have to want to do their grocery shop with us. It's not enough for them to use us as a lovely place for breakfast at the weekend. We want them to come and buy Kentish-grown apples, or local beans. To make this work more efficiently and affordably in the future, those in the industry need to take a long hard look at margins and supply chains and longer-term strategies"



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PETER'S YARD



KEEPING IT CLEAN

While keeping things hygienic should be a standard day-to-day practice, it's easy to let it slip. Here, two cheese sellers explain how they maintain quality

In the busy life of a cheesemonger, keeping things spick and span is no doubt part of the everyday task list that often gets done without much ceremony. Muscle memory can take over, you can get it done efficiently so long as you have the right tools to hand, and when it comes to training you can reel off your methodology like it's on the back of your hand.

However, when things are manic – think summer holidays, when staff are sick, and during the festive period – it's easy to let such things slip in the desire to keep as many customers happy and served as swiftly as possible.

This means that the odd refresh of best practice can work wonders; not least when new colleagues are joining the team.

Separate for safety

Moz Murphy of grate Newcastle suggests keeping things separate for optimum cleanliness. "We always use separate boards and knives for blue, soft and hard cheeses – cross contamination can happen very easily." The grate team also has a separate cutting area for soft cheeses, which are cut with knives or lyres, and a board dedicated to blue cheeses – "always the one in the middle of the counter," says Moz.

She also suggests that it might be helpful to have additional equipment to hand for busy periods. "Have more equipment than you think you need; I've inherited several extra handee cutting boards which are invaluable at peak times like Christmas when you have 20 people waiting to be served but the washing up isn't done!"

Clean as you go

The time-honoured skill of thorough handwashing has, in many situations, taken a back seat in favour of the speed and on-the-go convenience of antibacterial wipes and sanitisers, but not at grate says Moz. "Hot water is your friend!" she says. "I'd rather take the time to wash something up instead of using a cloth or sanitiser."

When Moz and the team use cloths, everything is disposable where possible, and she has learned to not expect that everyone around you shares the same habits around cleanliness... "Don't assume that everyone cleans like you do!" she says. "Make sure all members of the team have good instructions to follow and train them well."

When it comes to keeping this vital element of your work low-impact for you and your team, particularly during peak times, Moz suggests the old adage of cleaning as you go. "'Clean as you go' is a great lesson – if you keep on top of things they don't pile up," she says. "Taking two or three minutes in between serving customers ensures they won't get out of hand."

Clear scheduling is the order of the day at grate. "We have a daily and weekly schedule for everyone to follow so we don't have a build up of tasks and any time."

Keep your common sense

For Mark Kacary of Norfolk Deli, keeping it simple and relying on common sense has served the business well. "Make sure that the cheese counter is clean and cleaned regularly and one is constantly washing hands." Keeping clothes and equipment clean and is sometimes more easily said than done, but are simple ways to help the fight against bad bacteria taking over you cheese selection.

Mark also suggests making sure that members of the team know what the contact time is to avoid harmful bacteria or cross contamination, as well as working together to ensure that the temperature of the cheese counter is within permissable limits.

Maintaining the strict hygiene levels of a cheese counter may well seem like muscle memory, but by reminding everyone in your team how to do it thoroughly – and why it's so important – will keep your cheeses in optimum condition and customers coming back for more.

> "Don't assume that everyone cleans like you do! Make sure all members of the team have good instructions to follow and train them well"

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CHEESE UNCUT

New retail perspectives from industry experts

"Healthy cheese is made by healthy people"



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

I was inspired to write this month's column by the lovely Tarini Gupta from Spotted Cow Fromagerie in Mumbai, India.

India is a big place, and artisan cheese is not widely consumed, although I am excited to report that the artisan cheese market is on the up and India is indeed getting a real taste for the good stuff.

Much of the cheese sold in India is analogue cheese. Take paneer for example. Recently the producer Zomato Hyperpure (even the name is wrong) was in the spotlight for their analogue paneer. This style of cheese (not cheese) generally contains hydrogenated vegetable oils, which have higher levels of trans fats. This can increase your bad cholesterol and put you at higher risk of heart disease and inflammation. This is pure food adulteration and has no goodness whatsoever.

Unscrupulous businesses then use the analogue paneer instead of the real stuff to save money. Paneer is hugely popular throughout India. On menus a lot of restaurants choose not to mention analogue in the menu description.

Let's look at McDonald's – should the highly coloured so-called cheese slice that adorns their mass-produced burgers be called cheese? Well, here are the ingredients as listed on the company's website: milk, cream, water, cheese culture, sodium citrate, 2% or less of salt, citric acid, sodium phosphate, sorbic acid (preservative), lactic acid, acetic acid, enzymes, sodium pyrophosphate, natural flavour, colour added, and soy lecithin. This is not a cheese as we know it.

Take Waitrose and their cheese slices – here are the ingredients: cheese (milk, 60%), water, palm oil, milk whey powder, modified potato starch, emulsifying salts (sodium polyphosphate, sodium phosphates), flavourings, calcium phosphates, milk proteins, Colours (beta-carotene, paprika extract). Again, not a real cheese as we know it, potato starch, palm oil etc!

Industrialised food processes have ruined our diets and poisoned our world over the last 100 years, with only 30% of the world's soil being fertile enough to grow healthy produce. So, as consumers and small businesses we need to stand up and fight against mainstream cheese and food garbage.

Indeed, these are strong words but the cost to our global society can be truly measured when we look at the health of our humanity and the soil we grow food from. At the Oxford Real Farming Conference I listened to Vandana Shiva, a food sovereignty advocate, who inspired me beyond belief. She said that "building soil, building living soil is the greatest activity that human beings can be engaged in". Our daily bread bought from supermarkets will mostly contain glyphosate (unless organic) a common herbicide and cited by the World Health Organisation as a probable carcinogen. We are continuing to actively kill our soil and the animals to make way for large mono crop farming, with pesticides and synthetic fertilisers increasing in strength whilst the soil becomes lifeless. We are ingesting toxins through these intensive farming processes, not only through consumption but in the air we breathe and the water we drink.

We are living in a time when we must consider our cheese choices carefully. When it comes to our food choices, the farmers of the land are also the custodians of our planet and animals' health. We need the will of the people to seriously engage with these smaller, artisan, sustainable, ethically-minded and brilliant farming folk. For these good people they care about what they do and provide us.

These micro farmers and cheesemakers are happy with their subsistence. Healthy cheese is made by healthy people.

> "We need the will of the people to seriously engage with smaller, artisan, sustainable, ethically-minded and brilliant farming folk"



Italian maker announces new cheese

Cheesemaker Mario Olianas, founder of Yorkshire Pecorino, will officially launch his newest cheese, Town Crier, in late spring/early summer.

At the moment, Mario said, trials are underway with trusted customers to gain feedback and insight before the cheese officially hits the market.

In a depart from his usual varieties (which tend to be made with sheep's milk), Mario has chosen to craft Town Crier with cow's milk. "As were coming up to Christmas we had a shortage of milk and lost a lot of money because we had to stop cheesemaking," he explained, talking about the seasonality of sheep's milk, which runs out frequently across the industry due to demand.

Town Crier allows the cheesemaker to 'fill the gap' in the year. It's one of the first and only Taleggio-style British cheeses to come to market, designed in a round shape rather than the traditional square. "It's soft and creamy and adapted to the English palate," Mario said of the cheese, which is brine-washed up to six times, and matured for a minimum of two months, so when cut it reveals a gooey heart with a slightly chalky centre.

"The flavour has rich mushrooms and some meatiness to it, with a bit of acidity and a nice kick of salt as well," he adds.

As for the name. "Our town still has a town crier who is a competition winner. When I told him what I was going to call it, he came into the deli and did an announcement with the bell!" Keep your eye on social media for a full launch announcement.

Who will be the next 'Affineur of the Year'?

The fourth annual Affineur of the Year competition has been announced by the Academy of Cheese.

Hotly contested by cheesemongers across the UK, 2025's edition will be held on 3rd June at St Mary's Marylebone, London.

The prestigious event celebrates the artistry of maturing and refining cheeses, bringing together cheesemakers and mongers for a rare opportunity to compete on the same stage.

"The competition has been transformative for the UK cheese scene," said Academy of Cheese founding director, Tracey Colley. "By embracing the techniques of affinage, we are seeing cheesemakers and cheesemongers create entirely new products that have earned attention from cheese lovers and retailers alike."

This year entrants have been asked to mature a Quicke's Cheddar, Cropwell Bishop's Blue Shropshire, Fen Farm Dairy's Baron Bigod, White Lake Cheese's Solstice, and Trethowan Brothers' Gorwydd Caerphilly.

Tickets for the competition are available now from the Academy of Cheese website.





Cheesemaker celebrates milestone

High Weald Dairy in Sussex is preparing to make its 500th batch of Brighton Blue.

"It's quite a big deal, this make," said office manager Craig Payne. "Everyone's looking forward to celebrating this achievement. The cheese has won so many awards, including two Super Golds at the World Cheese Awards, Gold at the International Cheese & Dairy Awards, and Gold at the British Cheese Awards. It's become one of our signature varieties and to reach our 500th make is quite something!"

Brighton Blue is a creamy, semi-soft cow's milk blue, with a mellow, more delicate flavour. It's aged for six to eight weeks and Craig said it "tends to be liked by the young and the old because it's not too overpowering on the palate". The cheese is available in 150g fixed weight pieces, or as 800g and 1.6kg deli cuts.

Camphill unveils commemorative cheese

Camphill Village Trust at Botton Village near Whitby has spent seven decades perfecting craft cheeses in its on-site dairy using award-winning, unpasteurised milk from the Trust's herd of Short Horn dairy cattle into nine varieties, all the while providing support and opportunities to adults with learning disabilities, mental health challenges and complex needs.

To mark the Trust's 70-year anniversary, a new cheese – Jubilee – has been created. Mild and slightly crumbly, with an appearance, taste and texture similar to Wensleydale, Jubilee is matured for between five weeks and several months, for what they say is an "uncomplicated and comforting" flavour.

"Choosing Botton Village Organic Cheese means more than indulging in a delectable treat," said retail officer Suzanne Taylor. "It's about supporting a unique and inspiring community that champions inclusively, empowerment and sustainable practices."



People's Cheese competition returns

The Real Cheese Project has just announced the return of People's Cheese, revealing that this year's competition will celebrate cheesemaking innovation in the UK.

Coined 'Britain's Best New Cheese' the event, sponsored by Chiswick Cheese Market, is now calling for makers of new varieties from across the UK to submit their entries, free of charge, for the first round of public voting on 15th June.

As in previous editions of the competition, the People's Cheese 2025 final will be broadcast live online in September, with cheese lovers able to join the public judging panel by purchasing a tasting box of the four finalists, and tuning in on the night to help decide the winner. James Grant, co-founder of The Real Cheese Project, said, "We're super excited to now be championing Britain and Northern Ireland's newest cheeses. It's been a joy sharing so many incredible artisan cheeses with our public over the past two years, and we know they're going to be blown away by the thriving innovation on the UK cheese scene." Find out more at therealcheeseproject.co.uk

New Irish cheese launches

County Clare-based St Tola Cheese has recently announced a new addition to its offering – St Tola Karst.

"After a quiet winter, the farm is now back in full swing with more goats kidding," said owner Siobhán Ní Ghairbhith. "This means a lot more milk, of course, and that our cheese house is back in full production. St Tola Karst is the newest cheese in the family, named after its resemblance to the karst limestone landscape in the Burren near us here."

The raw milk cheese was developed with guidance from Neal's Yard Dairy and has a fluffy, creamy texture and bright flavour with hints of sweet cocoa.

"It is gently rolled by hand in vegetarian ash, then left to mature to develop its rich, delicious but not overpowering flavour with a mousse-like texture due to that handmade nature," added Siobhán. "It is best paired simply with the freshest of seasonal fruit like figs, strawberries or blackberries, though chefs are using it to create some fantastic dishes also."





CHEESES I LOVE

Three cheesemongers share the must-have products for their counters

MARK KACARY



The owner of The Norfolk Deli is vocal about his love of cheese, and the power of the cheesemonger to bring the stories of each product alive

WELLS ALPINE,
MRS TEMPLE
From the Mrs Temple's stable of Norfolk cheeses, Wells Alpine has a nuttiness and a texture that reminds one of those typical Alpine resorts. There are various classic combinations one could use with a Wells Alpine. I particularly like it with a Candi's Spice Carrot Chutney (keeping it Norfolk).

DELICE DE BOURGOGNE,
FROMAGERIE LINCET
This is just one of those cheeses I find hard to resist. There are numerous British varieties like this to try. Finn from Neal's Yard Creamery for example. In some ways this is the cheese equivalent to a marshmallow in texture and the way in which it just melts in your mouth. It is of course far better than a marshmallow, and in my view the perfect cheese to enjoy with a cold glass of Champagne. The sparkling sharpness of a lovely dry glass of fizz cuts through the triple cream richness of the cheese. This is heaven on a plate.

MONTAGNOLO,
KÄSEREI CHAMPIGNON
Often described by me as blue cheese for beginners. This is the perfect introduction to the varying complexities of blue cheese. It is soft, smooth and creamy. It feels like a Brie but has just enough blueness to it to combine a mushroomy flavour with a blueness that brings a welcome complexity and flavour. Add apples, celery or carrots to the plate in a raw food explosion. This cheese perfectly complements these items without any flavours overpowering each other.

GRAND NOIR,
KASEREI CHAMPIGNON
From the same region as Montagnolo, and since we introduced this to our cheese counter this has regularly become one of our most popular blue cheeses. Imagine the creaminess of a Montagnolo and then notch up the flavour to 11! This is wrapped in wax, which has allowed the cheese to mature with deeper flavours. And yet it's still not overpowering to anybody who is not that keen on blue cheeses. This can stand up to strong flavour combinations. I would have this cheese with a flavoursome IPA from Duration Brewery which is only a few miles way, and a preserve from The Garden Pantry like their Celeriac, Apple & Beer Chutney.

ST ANDREW'S,
ST ANDREWS FARMHOUSE CHEESE COMPANY
This is a proper, sharp-tasting Cheddar-style cheese. It doesn't hold back on brute strength. A favourite of customers who want "a strong cheese that is like Cheddar". Truth be told there are just so many wonderful Cheddars, and each and everyone of them has their own complexities and favour profiles. It would be very easy to create a cheeseboard comprising of nothing other than Cheddar, and yet for the cheeses to all offer something different. I like to pair this with something as equally bold, like sweet Pepperdews which have a sweetness and just the right amount of heat to bounce off its full-bodied nature.

ALP BLOSSOM, ALBERT KRAUS
Alpine cheeses are always a great addition to a cheese board as they offer their own unique textures and flavours, and nothing plays with flavours quite as much as an Alp Blossom. Covered in wild flowers, the cheese ranges in taste from sweet and floral to almost peppery. It feels wrong to do anything other than to allow it to express itself and be the star of the show. Serve with a plain sourdough cracker and glass of cold Chardonnay, or Bacchus from one of our favourite local vineyards such as Burn Valley, Cobble Hill or Flint.

STINKING BISHOP,
CHARLES MARTELL
I believe it is wrong to label this as a 'marmite cheese' unless you want to categorise those who can't get past the smell (those who don't like marmite) and those who see past the smell and realise that, just like a timid dog who simply likes to bark a lot, this cheese will love you for the love you show it in return. I adore a good full-bodied red wine with a Stinking Bishop, and try it with pickled pears, which work really well considering the cheese gets its reputation from being washed in perry.

SMOKED DAPPLE,
FERNDALE DAIRY
This is not a Cheddar, but we'll often offer this as a local alternative. It is a hard, unpasteurised cow's milk cheese, has plenty of flavour, and deserves its place on any cheeseboard. Alongside Dapple you'll find a Smoked Dapple, which has been lightly smoked to give it enough flavour to offer something extra without overpowering the senses with smokiness. I love this combined either with a nice smoky chilli and tomato chutney from either Candi's Chutney or The Garden Pantry.

ST JUDE, ST JUDE CHEESE
St Jude is a raw milk, soft and creamy cheese created and developed by Julie Cheney on the same farm as Baron Bigod (Fen Farm). Not too dissimilar to a St Marcellin. It comes in a small container and is just the perfect size to rest on your lap, spooning it out straight onto your favourite crackers – or straight into your mouth!



> "Just like a timid dog who simply likes to bark a lot, this cheese will love you for the love you show it in return"

JESSICA SUMMER



The founder of Mouse & Grape shares the cheeses she can't live without

GORGONZOLA DOLCE, TOSI
If you've been following my journey, you'll know I have an obsession with this cheese. It's moreish, decadent, gooey, salty, sweet, creamy, and completely addictive. The kind of cheese that lingers in your mind for days. Made in Piedmont, this blue is so soft you can eat it with a spoon – something I do regularly. Pair it with a sparkling rosé for a match made in heaven, or go for a light, fruity red like Gamay or Pinot Noir.

BARON BIGOD,
FEN FARM DAIRY
This cheese is nothing short of iconic. Made in Suffolk, Baron Bigod is one of the best Brie-style cheeses in the UK. It's got that perfect golden, oozing paste with a buttery, mushroomy, slightly almondy flavour. It's rich, indulgent, and one of my absolute favourites. I love it with a well-balanced Chardonnay or a lightly oaked Viognier - both bring out its luxurious, creamy texture beautifully.

TOR, WHITE LAKE CHEESE
White Lake is doing something truly special with goats' cheese. Tor is a gorgeous ash-coated pyramid with a delicate citrus tang and a fudgy texture. But I could just as easily go for Driftwood or Rachel – they're all fantastic in their own way. A crisp, mineral-driven Sauvignon Blanc or a textured Chenin Blanc works

DAN WILLIAMS



The 5th generation owner of Godfrey C Williams & Son in Sandbach shares his must-stock cheeses

BELTON FARM RED FOX,
BELTON FARM CHEESEMAKERS, SHROPSHIRE
A Red Leicester-type cheese - Smooth, sweet, and with a crunch. I find Belton Farm Red Fox is and is often my go-to choice when customers ask for a cheese recommendation for cheese on toast, jacket potatoes, or anything that requires 'a good melter'.

ROSARY GOAT'S CHEESE,
HAMPSHIRE
Very mild and soft, fresh and clean (to the point you'd barely notice it's a goat's cheese!). Fantastically versatile – we've paired this before with a whole range of different wines, including Sauvignon Blanc, unoaked Chardonnay, a crisp rosé, and even English Sparkling Wine.



so well with these, highlighting their bright, lemony notes.

CORNISH KERN,
LYNHER DAIRIES
This one is an absolute gem. It's a hard, Alpine-style cheese made in Cornwall, with a firm texture and deep, caramelised, nutty flavours. Think Comté meets Gouda, but with a unique British twist. It's a dream with a bold white Burgundy or a structured red like a Cabernet Franc.

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO
Simple but so good. I've completely fallen in love with Parmigiano Reggiano drizzled with aged balsamic vinegar or jelly and paired with a glass of red wine – honestly, try it. But it's also so versatile – great with crisp, dry whites like Verdicchio or even an elegant Barolo. The umami depth of the cheese is just magic with the acidity in the wine.


PARMESAN

LA TUR
This little Italian cheese is something special. Made from cow, goat, and sheep's milk, it's rich, creamy, and melts in your mouth like ice cream. It's also one of the most versatile cheeses for pairing. It works beautifully with sparkling wines like Prosecco, fruity reds like Beaujolais, or even a dessert wines like Moscato.

KING OF THE CASTLE,
WHITE LAKE DAIRY, SOMERSET
A recent discovery! King of the Castle is a mild, fresh, crisp and zesty Goat's cheese with a texture quite similar to Cheshire cheese. To find something so similar, yet so different to one of my all-time favourite cheeses is refreshing, and makes you fall in love with cheese all over again!

APPLEBY'S WHITE CHESHIRE,
APPLEBY'S DAIRY, SHROPSHIRE
Appleby's Dairy sits well within 'The Cheshire Plain', a flat lowland area where the majority of Cheshire Cheese was produced. My preference is for a mild and crisp Appleby's White Cheshire, great with slices of apple or fruit cake.

PITCHFORK CHEDDAR,
TRETHOWAN BROTHERS, SOMERSET
I'll have phases of which Cheddar I like to take home. Sometimes it will be a tangy wedge of Isle of Mull. Sometimes an earthy chunk of Montgomery's. Currently, I'm enjoying the dense and juicy Pitchfork, an artisan Somerset Cheddar that often beholds an orchestra of a flavour profile.

CORNISH YARG,
LYNHER DAIRIES, CORNWALL
The rise and rise of English Wine is something that British cheese shops and delis should embrace – with English cheese and wine pairings the best way to do this. The mild and lemony Cornish Yarg works very well with an English white wine with a bit of acidity – I recommend Cornish Yarg with New Hall Single Estate Bacchus 2022, Rowton Solaris 2022, or Simpsons Gravel Castle Chardonnay 2023.

APRÈS-SOLEIL,
JUMI CHEESE, SWITZERLAND
A recent addition to our counter, Après Soleil is a hard Alpine cheese with a subtle crystalline texture and a great depth and balance of distinctive sweet and savoury flavours. The name 'Après Soleil' comes from the unique maturation process for this cheese, where sunlight streams into the cave and alters its character.

> "The mild and lemony Cornish Yarg works very well with an English white wine with a bit of acidity"

NORTHERN BLUE,
SHEPHERD'S PURSE CHEESES, NORTH YORKSHIRE
Again, another tough one to narrow down! Northern Blue is a customer favourite in our shop, owing to the balance of rich and creamy paste against a full-flavoured and tangy blue bite. A great British alternative to stronger continental blues like Gorgonzola Picante.

BARON BIGOD,
FEN FARM DAIRY, SUFFOLK
British producers create some outstanding cheeses that rival, even better, well-known Continental examples. Replace your Manchego with Spenwood, ditch the Gorgonzola Dolce for Beauvale, and switch the Feta for Graceburn! Above all, the Baron Bigod sits as my best replacement – to the point that we only stock Brie de Meaux at Christmas!

THE ITALIAN JOB,
THE GREAT BRITISH CHEESE COMPANY, CHESHIRE
Blended cheese continues to grow in popularity (Ignore it at your peril!). If you want to look beyond the usual Wensleydale & Cranberry, 'The Italian Job' is worth a try. A mild Wensleydale cheese with zesty lemon and refreshing limoncello makes this one of our most popular blended cheeses for summer!


PITCHFORK



SPOTLIGHT ON: RUTLAND RED

Rutland Red has long been the hidden gem in Clawson's crown, but the time has come for this extra special cheese to shine





Visit any esteemed cheese counter in the UK, and chances are they'll have a masterpiece by Clawson Farms on show. Stilton® and Shropshire Blue are popular choices, but Rutland Red – a richly buttered Red Leicester with sweet-savoury notes and a flaky texture – is also ripe and ready for enjoyment.

As well as its range being revered by cheese lovers for generations, Clawson is dedicated to doing things right – from its utilisation of modern technology to ensure consistently high quality products to the artistry of its in-house master cheesemakers and its sustainable support of local farming communities, this is a business with heart.

Concientious cheesemaking

Since 1912, the Clawson cooperative has supported a growing number of dairy farmers in its local community via the creation of fine quality artisanal cheeses, and this philosophy rings through ever stronger today. "The business was founded by 12 local dairy farmers to build a more sustainable living for themselves while investing in the next generation of farmers, and while we are now owned by 30 farmers located within a 30 mile radius our mission is still the same," begins Bill Mathieson, managing director. "It's what gets me out of bed in the morning – the aim to do what we can to support the farmers in our local area. I love knowing that we're creating positive change in the community."

With 25% of Clawson's profit going back to the farmers and 75% being reinvested in the future of the business, growth has been sustainable – a credit to the seven-strong board of farmers who govern the business and the broader cooperative members who have consistently invested in the business.

The business is currently navigating the same "choppy waters" as other farmers and cheesemakers, but the team is passionate about doing so sustainably, working with environmental consultants Map of Ag to create viable sustainability plans to reduce the business's eco footprint from field to counter.

A modern classic

Sitting at the heart of the stunning Vale of Belvoir, it's only natural that the provenance and heritage of Clawson is a leading light in its present and future plans. "We're constantly inspired by being able to trace our products back to the farm where the milk was produced, and the fact that our closest farm is only 1,000 yards from the dairy is a source of genuine pride," says Bill.

This proximity to its suppliers is just one of the elements feeding into the PDO status of some of its products – namely Blue Stilton® and White Stilton® – but Bill has long been surprised around the lack of consumer understanding around what PDO status means, which in the case of Stilton means it can only be produced in and with milk from Leicestershire, Nottingham and Derbyshire. Additionally, it has to be made to a traditional Stilton-making process. Bill calls upon the industry to do more education around this, as in other markets – for example, in France, Champagne would be celebrated for having a PDO.



PAUL EGGLESTON, CHAIRMAN, AND HIS DAUGHTER AMY

Indeed, the story of Rutland Red has its roots in Stilton production, with the sales of the latter often weighted towards Christmas and production reliant on spring milk. To utilise the milk from other seasons, many Stilton-makers created a Red Leicester-style cheese and Clawson reinvigorated this in the early 2000s, using traditional methods including open vats, handheld hoops and presses, and turning and grading by hand.

The open-textured cheese, once formed, is clothbound and smothered in butter which both retains moisture and boosts flavour. This intense flavour develops as the cheese matures for a minumum of six months. The resultant cheese, the only pasteurised Red Leicester made using traditional methods, is rich in flavour with a flaky texture. Intensely savoury with a hint of buttery caramel and nuttiness on the finish, Bill likes to enjoy it "with a sweet relish on a cracker with a glass of great red wine."

The golden touch

As valuable to Clawson as its cheesemaking traditions are the talented craftspeople who create it. "We have a number of colleagues here whose families have worked here for generations," says Bill. "Richard, who is our head cheesemaker, is the third generation of his family who have produced cheese at Clawson – his grandmother used to make Stilton here, and a great uncle made a Red Leicester. It's wonderful that these traditional skills have been passed down from generation to generation within our team.



BILL MATHIESON, MD

"Indeed, the family of our chairman, Paul Eggleston, were founding members, showing the longevity of involvement and relationships in the community and highlighting this multi-generational vein still runs through everything we do, from farmers to cheesemakers.."

While time-honoured skills and a rich cheesemaking heritage are at its heart, Clawson has invested in modern technology to boost the consistency and efficiency of its operations, says Bill. "For example, we've recently invested in state-of-the-art air handling units in our cheese rooms to maintain optimum moisture levels and improves the quality of the cheese. We've even been working with the University of Nottingham to map the DNA of the unique microflora within our maturation rooms to ensure we have the best ecosystem for our cheeses, as creating a great cheese is not just about what you do when you combine ingredients, it's also about the affinage and how you care for the cheese after it's been produced."

To produce cheeses as special as Clawson's, a certain kind of magic has to be present in the form of master cheesemakers, who at Clawson Farms have each developed a set of golden rules for each cheese type. "These will be tweaked throughout the year as milk constantly changes and each cheese is different, but they all have a sense of methodology and consistency to what they do," says Bill. "Cheese is a living organism and as such is going to show variations, so we are careful to create the optimum conditions for our products to thrive and be consistently delicious."

With consumers across the UK and beyond relishing Clawson's cheeses – and awards judges too; Rutland Red won the Best Territorial Cheese at the British Cheese Awards 2024 and a gold medal at the Global Cheese Awards 2024, while its Stilton won Supreme Champion at the International Cheese Awards in 2024, which followed Shropshire Blue being named Supreme Champion in 2022 – the sky's the limit, but the team has no interest in being the biggest player in the market.

"Our vision is to be the number one cheesemaker for provenance, and to handcraft consistently excellent cheeses by our master cheesemakers and using their care and craft to delight cheese lovers again and again," says Bill. With the likes of Rutland Red in its arsenal, and a plethora of fine food credentials under its belt, it is well on its way.

Bill concludes, "Rutland Red still continues to be a hidden gem largely because it has very limited distribution in cheese shops, delis and garden centres, so please support our farming cooperative and bring our hidden gem for your customers to enjoy. Speak to your wholesalers about stocking Clawson's Rutland Red."

> "Our vision is to be the number one cheesemaker for provenance and to handcraft consistently excellent cheeses by our master cheesemakers, using their care and craft to delight cheese lovers again and again"

CLAWSON
19 FARMS 12
MASTER CHEESEMAKERS

At Clawson Farms, we've been a proud farmer-owned cooperative since 1912.

Our Master Cheesemakers are dedicated to ensure exceptional quality, award-winning cheese, every time.



ARTISAN BLUE STILTON® PDO

GOLD AWARD WINNING, WORLD CHAMPION

A well-balanced flavour with a rich & creamy texture & distinctive blue veins. Full bodied, complex savoury flavours and a blend of tangy, earthy undertones. Traditionally crafted, handgraded, hand-turned.

Protected Designation Of Origin (PDO) Status

King of British Cheese Heritage



ARTISAN SHROPSHIRE BLUE

AWARD WINNING, SUPREME CHAMPION

Deliciously creamy, full flavoured with mellow blue undertones. A distinctive golden orange colour, with a golden crust. Traditionally crafted, hand-graded, hand-turned.

From the Master Cheesemakers of Gold Award Winning, Artisan Blue Stilton® PDO



ARTISAN AGED RUTLAND RED®

GOLD AWARD WINNING

Deliciously rich and caramelised flavour. Rich orange, firm but flaky, open texture. Traditionally crafted, wrapped in cloth, hand-buttered and matured over many months.

Perfected over three generations of master cheese makers

The only pasteurised Red Leicester produced in the county of Leicestershire

To find out more, contact our sales team on enquiries@clawson.co.uk or call +44 (0) 1664 822332

www.clawson.co.uk



SWEET SUCCESS

Those *Speciality Food* readers old enough to remember school tuck shops will likely recall them with rose-tinted spectacles - the thrill of penny chews and rustling paper bags of sherbet, pear drops and toffee bon bons.

Old fashioned sweet shops paying homage to yesteryear remain incredibly popular, and retailers say customers are instinctively drawn towards candy displays with a retro vibe.

Two British businesses seeking to ride the wave of good feeling for traditional confectionery are Fudge Kitchen and Cottage Delight, which have both made significant investment in this space within the last few months.

"We've noticed you could have a billion different flavours and different formats coming out of the kitchen every single day, but what people really want to see is good quality ingredients, and tradition," says Fudge Kitchen CEO, Richard Parson. "We make new flavours of fudge, for example, but people always come back to really rich toffees."

Delivered in striking packaging, the business's newest line includes two crumbly fudges (Traditional Vanilla and Sea-Salted Caramel), made with a slightly different recipe to the softer slabs prepared and sold in its stores. "It's a recipe we've perfected over time. We've been known for our handmade, hand cut, smooth American-style fudge for 40 years, but people often come into the shops and say they'd prefer a crumbly fudge. When we sampled the salted caramel flavour, they told us it's exactly what they wanted."

Alongside fudge is Rock Salted Peanut Brittle, boiled in copper pans, poured directly onto marble tables, and hand stretched to just the right thickness before being snapped into

A TASTE OF THE PAST

Nostalgia is sweeping through NPD across multiple food and drink categories, *Speciality Food* reports

Innovation abounds within the speciality food and drink sector – and there will always be a strong demand for the 'next big thing'. But what consumers are craving most right now has roots firmly in the past.

Steaming sponge puddings. Cottage pie swirled with mash and doused in lashings of gravy. Dippy egg and soldiers. Lollies and boiled sweets coated in lip-puckering sugar. These are just some of the foods resonating with a British public that seeks comfort, tradition, and the warming cloak of nostalgia.

Supermarket giant ASDA was one of the first retailers to cotton on to the longing for all things 'retro' in 2023, with the trend listed as one to seriously watch in its annual report.

The domino effect from this data has trickled into all parts of the UK's culinary scene – from delis, food halls, foodservice and farm shops, to pubs, cafes and restaurants.

Top brands are looking to the past as they consider new product development and packaging requirements. Dr Oetker, for example, released a range of Old School Mixes recently. These have, they say, become their top category.

Independent retailer and producer Kelly Peak, of Peak and the Pantry has also launched her own nostalgic recipe kits, including Malted Hot Chocolate, and Campfire Chilli Con Carne.

"Nostalgia in food isn't just about recreating the past," Kelly explains. "It's about rediscovering it in a way that feels fresh and exciting."

Kelly has noticed a real shift in how people cook and shop for food post-Pandemic. "Consumers are revisiting the comforting dishes they know and love, but they want to elevate them with richer flavours and high-quality ingredients," she says.



Gabriel Bray, development manager at Good Food Studio, agrees, and says he's noticed nostalgic food gaining strong momentum in the UK, with many businesses taking old fashioned dishes to the next level by refining their presentation and ingredients.

"A great example is Bangers in Shoreditch, which reimagines the classic 'greasy spoon' with a more aesthetic approach and high-quality produce. There's also a growing consumer preference for the traditional and 'wholesome', likely influenced by increased awareness of ultra-processed foods. This shift suggests that the recent nostalgia trend isn't just about sentimentality – it's also becoming a marker of quality and authenticity."

Clays bar in London has fully embraced the public's desire to eat and drink the past, by crafting menus that remind customers of their childhood – albeit with an upmarket twist. This has led to 25% year on year growth, says operations director Jon Calabrese, who adds that he thinks Millennials are leading the charge on this trend.

"There's no greater source of comfort than the food we grew up with," he says. "Beyond that, we live in a world of instant gratification, shaped by social media and the need for quick, effortless decision-making. Nostalgia gives businesses a powerful tool. It taps into childhood memories, making choices easier, while offering a unique experience."

This resonates with Nico Simeone, founder of Six by Nico. "Nostalgic flavours offer diners an escape from their everyday life, taking them back to simpler moments of joy," he says. "In a way, it's like finding a moment of calm in a world that feels unpredictable. Nostalgia in food provides a sense of emotional security, giving guests a taste of happiness, and a connection to better times."

Simona Tweedie, lead analyst at FMCG Gurus says although the Pandemic has passed, 2025 has its own troubles to navigate – global instability, financial insecurity – and she thinks consumers are prioritising their emotional wellness as a buffer, which is directly influencing food, drink and flavour preferences.

"Two thirds of global consumers surveyed in 2024 said that they seek out small indulgences for self-care purposes at least some of the time," she says, adding that four in 10 have described turning to comfort food and drink more frequently over the last 12 months.

What do consumers want from the nostalgia trend?

"Over the next couple of years there will be a high demand for known and trusted flavours," Simona thinks, adding that traditionally styled packaging, and limited editions of discontinued products are fantastic sales drivers in food and drink. Though, "it's important to note that nostalgic re-launches must be able to compete with modern offerings from a quality perspective.

"Whilst there are many opportunities for heritage brands to refer to their history and re-engage consumers through nostalgia, this trend also offers opportunities for new brands," she continues. "Classic flavours and retro branding will evoke fun, and feelings of connecting with simpler times, even if the design or the brand itself is completely new."

It's all about storytelling, adds Nico. "People are craving dining experiences that spark joy, provoke conversations and foster emotional connections."

"Timeless, crowd-pleasing flavours will always have a place on any menu," says Jon, adding that nostalgia is no longer about just pie and mash or a Sunday roast, it's more considered, bringing in global influences, interpreted through modern techniques and local sourcing.

COMMENTATORS



KELLY PEAK
PEAK AND THE PANTRY



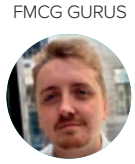
GABRIEL BRAY
GOOD FOOD STUDIO



NICO SIMEONE
SIX BY NICO



SIMONA TWEEDIE
FMCG GURUS



RICHARD PARSON
FUDGE KITCHEN



NICKI WEDGEWOOD
COTTAGE DELIGHT



JON CALABRESE
CLAYS

individual pieces.

And the range is completed by Vegan Society accredited two-tone Raspberry Coconut Ice, infused with real raspberries.

Already the products have been selling well, with Richard saying they've seen considering demand across all four new additions.

Cottage Delight's recent acquisitions within the confectionery world have enabled the business to grow and offer more nostalgic delights to its customers.

This includes the purchase last year of Fosters Foods, bringing in their Treat Co lines, and becoming a distributor (through wholesale) of Charles Butler – whose sweets (from chocolate limes to liquorice and blackcurrant) - are made using handmade secrets and recipes passed down the family.

Cottage Delight is in an ideal position to bring these products to a wider audience, being a trusted partner for many retailers in the speciality sector, says trade marketing lead, Nicki Wedgewood. "We've got 50 years of history behind us. That history is what people look for, and what keeps them coming back," she explains. "We've got a very loyal following, and I think that 'trust appeal' really matters. As a brand, from a Cottage Delight perspective, people know they're getting the best."

Talking about the expansion into traditional sweets, Nicki says Cottage Delight knows that historically confectionery tends to weather a poor political climate well. "It's considered a small luxury," she explains. "People are more inclined to reward themselves with a little treat, and that's so prevalent now. There's been a slight shift within confectionery production to create items at the right price point and style to fit in a hamper, be given as a small token gift, or as a gift someone could give themselves."

The most popular items within Treat Co right now, Nicki says, certainly fit the nostalgic bill, including peanut brittle, clotted cream fudge bars, and cherry nougat, while sales of giant share bags and filled sweetie jars see growth too.

"One of our bestselling ranges is the chocolate-covered honeycomb. We had milk chocolate and white chocolate but we've now brought in salted caramel too, pushing that flavour profile a bit, so we're keeping that thread of nostalgia people like, and bringing it up to date."

As for where this space is going, the brand is delighting younger (and young at heart) customers with its Unicorn mix, blending chocolate jazzies and marshmallows, and anything with a sour profile is selling well.

"Bon bons, pear drops, jelly babies and dolly mixtures do so well for our retailers. They're things customers actively look for, especially in the independent sector because they're things you can't necessarily find in a supermarket, and because they're elevated versions with a more special feel to them."

With more than two dozen varieties available in the Treat Co range, there's something for everyone, Nicki says, adding that Cottage Delight has introduced free of charge, scallop-edged retail stands, with a traditional Victorian feel, for retailers, to help them showcase these joyful, colourful products in a way that directly appeals to shoppers.

Why should retailers be stocking more nostalgic products?

It's an easy win, thinks Kelly. "It's driving premium purchases," she says. "Consumers are willing to pay more for better versions of nostalgic favourites." Kelly also believes nostalgic products help foster emotional connections with customers, encourage repeat purchases ("once people discover a product or recipe that enhances a familiar dish, they come back for more") and are pivotal for creating engaging social media stories and in-store marketing.

Speaking as a Millennial, and one of the key target audiences for this trend, Jon thinks his demographic is in its time of prosperity, driving forward, while looking back. "The next generation will likely do the same in their own way when their time comes.

"What remains constant is the pursuit of excellence. The best operators don't just follow trends, they elevate them. By sourcing the finest ingredients, using the best techniques and delivering exceptional experiences, they ensure that nostalgia isn't just a fleeting moment, but a foundation for something timeless."



2025 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

STOCK CHECK



WALKER'S NONSUCH ORIGINAL CREAMY TOFFEE SLAB

A huge 400g sharing slab of the traditional confectioner's creamy toffee, made with natural ingredients, including real butter. Comes with a novelty hammer.

walkers-nonsuch.co.uk



SUMMERDOWN DARK CHOCOLATE PEPPERMINT DOMINOES

Moreish, svelte dark chocolate thins which can be snapped down the middle for two perfect bites. Each infused with the farm's single-estate Black Mitcham peppermint oil.

summerdown.com



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A tangy, but creamy take on this popular retro flavour. Made with potatoes grown, cooked, seasoned and packaged on the North Essex farm. Suitable for vegans.

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ARTISAN VINEGAR COMPANY ARTISAN MALT VINEGAR

This isn't just any malt vinegar. Production begins with fine Maris Otter malt and Cornish spring water, naturally fermented and oak matured before being drawn from the barrel.

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Chunky, buttery delights, with a toothsome bite and nostalgic taste. A must-have for the biscuit tin, and perfect for dunking!

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LOTTIE SHAW'S YORKSHIRE PARKIN

The family's award-winning signature bake, made to a more than 100-year-old recipe. It's sticky, gingery, treacly and moreish.

lottieshaws.co.uk



FARMHOUSE BISCUITS OAT FLIPS

This is the product that customers return for time and time again, for its crumbly texture, and warming, toasty, sweet oat flavour.

farmhouse-biscuits.co.uk



MAYNARD HOUSE APPLE & ELDERFLOWER JUICE

A traditionally-made juice, crafted using the farms own apples, fragranced with early summer elderflowers. Tastes like juice used to taste.

maynardhouse.co.uk



FEED THE **APPETITE** FOR BETTER

Today's fine food consumers are passionate about eating only good quality meat – and, for them, the work starts in the field

COMMENTATORS



ANDREW NIVEN
THE KNOWLEDGE BANK



FARSHAD KAZEMIAN
THE ETHICAL BUTCHER



LORD NEWBOROUGH
RHUG ESTATE

Headlines abound about the growth of vegetarian and plant-based diets, but grabbing less attention – but no less important – is the increasing consumer appetite for better quality, ethically-produced meat. With many meat-avoiders doing so because of ethical concerns about the lives and health of the animals raised for consumption, ethically sourced meat could bridge the gap for many conscientious shoppers.

A growing opportunity

The wider meat market isn't being hit as hard as you might think, despite the growth of vegetarianism and veganism. "The fresh meat and butchery sector has seen the beginnings of a turnaround in fortune as sales of fresh meats and prepared fresh meats across all UK retail channels rose 2% in volume and 7% in value across 2024 to £7.2bn," says Andrew Niven, strategic insight manager manager at The Knowledge Bank.

"There are several forces at play here," he continues. "The sharp increases in prices over the last two years has been particularly felt in the out-of-home sector. Consequently, mainstream shoppers are looking for cost-effective luxuries like ribs or a leg of lamb to make dinner feel high-end while still costing less than a takeaway or restaurant meal. They are also turning to premium options like venison meatballs – which saw an 18% increase in sales over past year – to elevate everyday dishes like spaghetti and meatballs."

While many shoppers purchase meat at independent fine food retailers expecting to pay a premium in return for high quality products, this doesn't meant they're not seeking value, says Andrew. "Whilst buyers who choose to shop at independents and craft butchers may not be as price inhibited as some shoppers in multiples, they are just as demanding on value, if not more so. This doesn't mean they're settling for lower quality; it's about buying less expensive and overlooked cuts of meat and elevating them to remarkable levels, replicating at home the techniques demonstrated by chefs who showcase nose-to-tail dining."

Doing it right

While for many concerned shoppers, locally-shot wild deer could be considered the epitome of ethical meat due to the animals not having been raised for their meat, the scale of this market – as well as its regionality – doesn't make it suitable for all retailers and shoppers. So, what are they alternatives?

"It's important to remember that what we eat is directly tied to 'what our food ate' – the health of the animals and the land they are raised on is ultimately what we put into our bodies. The more 'down to earth' the system, the better it is for us and the planet," begins Farshad Kazemian of The Ethical Butcher.

Farshad considers this approach to be key to a healthy future for the food industry. "The Ethical Butcher is vital because it represents a return to a more connected and mindful way of producing and consuming food," he continues. "It is not just a tradesperson but an advocate for food systems that respect animal welfare, promote sustainability, and focus on quality. As regenerative farming practices become more widespread, The Ethical Butcher is playing a key role in nurturing a system that restores, rather than depletes, the environment."

There is undoubtedly a growing appetite for ethically sourced meat, says Farshad. "This shift is driven by a deeper awareness of where food comes from, particularly as consumers are realising the importance of soil health and animal welfare."

79% OF SHOPPERS CONSIDER ANIMAL WELFARE A CRUCIAL FACTOR WHEN CHOOSING MEAT
QUALITY MEAT SCOTLAND

"Quality and animal welfare are incredibly important to today's fine food consumers," agrees Lord Newborough of Rhug Estate. "There's a growing awareness and concern regarding where food comes from, how animals are treated, and the overall quality of the meat they consume. Consumers are increasingly willing to pay a premium for products that are ethically sourced and exhibit superior taste and texture, reflecting a shift toward organic and sustainability giving health-conscious choices."

Ethical meat, ethically farmed

The topic of ethical meat brings the hot topic of regenerative farming to the fore, too. "Regenerative farming, which focuses on improving soil and land health, is gaining recognition for producing meat that not only tastes better but is also part of a healthier food system," explains Farshad. "People are increasingly aware that the quality of what we eat depends on the quality of the environment it comes from, and are therefore seeking food that aligns with their values of sustainability, health, and animal welfare."

At Rhug Estate, organic farming practices are at the centre of its meat production. "Our butchery at Rhug Estate prides itself not only on the quality of meat but also on a commitment to sustainable and organic farming practices," says Lord Newborough. Transparency is key. "We offer farm tours and samples to enhance customer knowledge and appreciation of different cuts and cooking methods, ensuring our



TOP-SELLERS AT RHUG ESTATE

"Our most popular meat products typically include premium cuts like ribeye steaks, pork tenderloins, and ethically our Rhug organic chicken," says Lord Newborough. "These items are top-sellers due to their versatility, flavour profile, and the increasing trend toward cooking at home, where consumers are seeking elevated culinary experiences. Seasonal items, such as specialty sausages during holidays, also gain popularity."

customers feel connected to their food."

Health concerns are also a driving force here. "The whole areas of wellness and sustainability are increasingly overlapping," says Andrew. "Descriptors such as 'grass-fed', 'regenerative', 'organic' and 'heritage breeds' are taking hold in shopper consciousness, adding to the sense that 'what's good for me must be good for the planet'. In the world of high-end dining, chefs have even described this interrelationship as the future of gastronomy.

"This is further backed by recent research from Quality Meat Scotland that shows that 79% of shoppers consider animal welfare a crucial factor when choosing meat. And further analysis from The Knowledge Bank shows that provenance also plays a vital role in buying behaviours: 50% of people look for the country of origin on product labels and 43% prefer locally-produced items. These findings highlight the importance of transparency in sourcing, especially as shoppers become more selective with their meat purchases."

A bright future

There is plenty of work to be done in the fight for ethical meat, says Farshad. "We can support regenerative farmers, educate customers about the direct link between soil health and the quality of the food they eat, and advocate for transparency in sourcing. Retailers should encourage consumers to think about "what their food ate" and how the land was cared for, as this will ultimately influence the food they put on their plates. By embracing these practices, retailers can help shape a food system that nurtures both the land and human health."



Lord Newborough says that work has to be done to build consumer recognition of high quality, ethical meat. "While there is a niche audience that truly appreciates the art of butchery, widespread education is still necessary," says Lord Newborough. "Many consumers lack a fundamental understanding of different cuts of meat, their origins, and how to properly prepare and cook them."

Adding value through education will raise the profile of good butchery, he continues. "Increasing education around butchery techniques not only enhances the consumer's experience but also helps to elevate the overall perception of the craft."

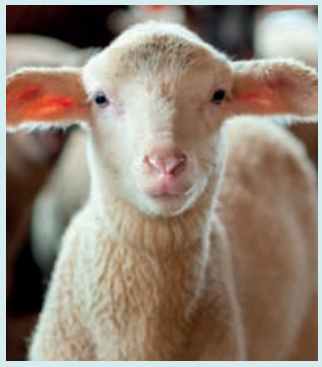
Ultimately, says Andrew, "The number one factor that keeps shoppers coming back to meat is taste. The reason the tech-inspired meat substitutes sector is declining as rapidly as it rose is because it hasn't been able to replicate the taste and flavours of the natural product.

"If retailers harness provenance, welfare and nutrition to craft a message that focuses on meat's superior taste then the success of 2024 should be repeated in years to come."

> "The fresh meat and butchery sector has seen the beginnings of a turnaround in fortune as sales of fresh meats and prepared fresh meats across all UK retail channels rose 2% in volume and 7% in value across 2024 to £7.2bn"

HOW TO **STOCK ETHICAL MEAT**

"Retailers should prioritise sourcing from farms that employ regenerative farming practices, focusing on soil health, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration," says Farshad of The Ethical Butcher. "Look for certifications such as Pasture for Life (PFLA), LEAF and Regenefied, which ensure high standards in regenerative and sustainable farming. Consumers should ask questions about the farming methods behind the products they buy – how the animals were raised, whether the land is being cared for in a way that improves soil health, and how sustainable practices are being implemented. When soil is healthy, the result is not just better meat but a better, more sustainable food system."





COMMENTATORS



TARA MEI
MAHALO



MARIA WHITEHEAD
HAWKSHEAD RELISH



BARNABY EDWARDS
THE GARLIC FARM



CONNOR FIELD
FIELD BLENDS



LORD NEWBOROUGH
RHUG ESTATE



JACK GODIK
SUCRE



KARL ARNEBERG
AUGUSTE NOEL

AL FRESCO SEASON

The months of eating outdoors have arrived, and Brits are getting ready to barbecue. Here's how to maximise this seasonal opportunity



Every year, barbecue season rolls around like delicious clockwork. At the first sign of temperatures rising British consumers are dusting down their outdoor cooking kit and prepping their favourite summery dishes. Some dishes – burgers, hot dogs and potato salad – are stalwarts, so it's worth stocking high quality ingredients so customers can indulge in these family favourites, but there are plenty of other delicious options on the menu in 2025.

Of course, as well as the conventional meat-heavy options, be sure to sell options for the customers – and their guests – who follow vegetarian or plant-based diets; these days there's a whole host of formats and flavours to explore. Also, don't sniff at barbecued vegetables, especially those that have been boosted with a flavour-packed rub or marinade. These will go down well with everyone, whatever their dietary preferences.

Variety sells

This year, shoppers are hungry for options. "Indie retailers need to look beyond the obvious this barbecue season because people are expecting variety more than ever, and they're looking to the independents to provide that extra special something," begins Tara Mei, founder of wholesaler Mahalo. "We've moved on from meat rubs and plant-based cheese. This season is all about variety, from world foods to innovative condiments."

Trending world flavours such as those hailing from Korea or Malaysia are bound to be popular with shoppers seeking new taste experiences. "Indies can set themselves apart this BBQ season by championing world flavours. Gochujang, peanut rayus and kimchi ketchups are making great strides as people search for authentic flavours from different cuisines," Tara continues. "Plus, eye catching packaging plays an increasingly important role as people want interesting bottles and conversation openers on their tables."

Tara recommends Makan Malaysia's Sambal Belacan ("normally quite hard to find, great to see a British brand"); Peat'd Peat Smoked Tomato Sauce, which has been made with smoked tomatoes for an incredibly rich, deep and complex flavour; Goat Rodeo Goods' Hell Or High Water Hotdog Pickles ("it's not just about the meat, people are just as keen to explore the accoutrements"); Flavour Bombs' Seafood Boil and Builin Blasta's Smoked Onion Mayo.

It's all about al fresco

For Maria Whitehead, director of Hawkshead Relish, it's time to widen the net beyond classic barbecue items and embrace summer as the season of outdoor cooking. "People are veering away from traditional burgers and sausages and looking for things that are a bit different that they can cook on their barbecue. I even cook paella on the barbecue!" she begins. Multi-purpose products such as their Original Black Garlic Ketchup – great as a marinade and accompaniment – and Sticky Chilli Marinade – delicious with ribs and chicken wings, or as a dipping sauce – are the name of the game; avoiding wastage as well as ensuring tasty dishes all round.

"People are interested in playing with flavours, but there are still a lot of people who have cupboards full of things they don't know what to do with," Maria continues. "So we're investing in travelling around to our stockists to run demonstrations, so that people can see for themselves how our products can be utilised."

New on the Hawkshead Relish horizon – and perfect for al fresco dining – is Kimchi Ketchup; an ambient product inspired by Maria and Mark's travels to Japan and Korea late last year. "It's launching at the Farm Shop & Deli Show," she says, "and we're very excited about it! It has the tang and layers of flavour that you want from kimchi, but a smooth texture so you can use it in dishes such as Tom Yum soup, or add cabbage if you want that texture. In our opinion it's got the perfect mouthfeel and lingering taste that we love about conventional kimchi, but as an ambient product."

Pack a flavour punch

When temperatures rise, so does the consumer appetite for punchy flavour – and The Garlic Farm's range has this in droves. "Whether you're cooking up a simple grill or a full spread with a plethora of sides, The Garlic Farm collection can add garlicky flair to your outdoor get-together," begins Barnaby Edwards, director. "Our flavour-packed dressings, dips, pickles and sauces range from cook-out classics ketchup and barbecue sauce, to spicy pickles, hot sauces and garlicky butters – so your great British BBQ can be as simple or elaborate as you wish it to be."

Versatility is the name of the game at any time of year, but really comes into its own during the summer.

Barnaby's recommendations? "Our Garlic Butter with Parsley, Thyme and Black Pepper is well known for pairing beautifully with grilled sweetcorn, and a drizzle can really elevate a vegetable skewer. Garlic Jam with Chilli is brilliantly versatile and adds a punch of sweet spice to a classic beef burger or grilled chicken. Our Toasted Garlic Mayonnaise works wonderfully stirred into a potato salad or coleslaw."

DISTRIBUTOR INSIGHT



Karl Arneberg, managing director of Auguste Noel, reveals this year's barbecue-ready top sellers

We stock a wide variety of products and brands ideal for barbecues, but our most popular BBQ sauces come from the award-winning US manufacturer Sweet Baby Ray's. As their tagline says, "The Sauce is the Boss!" – and it truly is, offering a delicious flavour that pairs perfectly with almost anything.

In addition, we carry staple condiments from well-loved UK brands such as Wilkin & Sons and Mrs Darlington's. These provide the essential table sauces you'd expect. Of particular note within the Mrs Darlington's range are some personal favourites: Spicy Tomato & Sticky Onion Chutney, which is a perfect match for sausages and burgers, and Pickled Baby Onions, which are a staple in our household. These tangy little treats are incredibly versatile and complement a variety of meals.

The UK fine food sector is constantly evolving, with new global flavours making their way into the market. In 2025, we are excited to launch a range of authentic Greek products from Mikos, bringing traditional grilled Souvlaki – whether chicken, lamb, or vegetables – straight to UK homes and BBQs. This range includes authentic Greek pitta breads, seasoning mixes, gyros sauce and chili sauces, all designed for easy use with no prep work required. Having personally tried these products, I can vouch for their quality and taste. The owner, Hugo, even set up a BBQ in our car park for us to experience the range firsthand, and it was absolutely delicious!

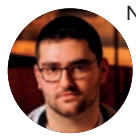
Additionally, we're importing a fantastic selection of mustards, condiments and pickles from Bornibus in France. A standout item is their Cornichons, which are wonderfully crunchy and make a perfect BBQ accompaniment. For condiments, there are some exciting flavours to try, like Aioli, which is great as a dip for raw vegetables or as a topping for burgers and chicken. And for a real twist, why settle for regular mayo when you can try Summer Truffle Mayonnaise? This rich, creamy mayo infused with subtle truffle umami is the perfect pairing for grilled meats and vegetables.

Over the last twelve months, we're definitely seeing a shift towards more diverse flavours on BBQs. Personally, I'm a fan of using Kikkoman Soy or Teriyaki as a marinade or glaze – they're incredibly versatile adding a rich umami flavour to grilled fish, meats, or vegetables.

Hot sauces remain a key trend and we offer a fantastic selection of spicy sauces from El Yucateco: a range of Mexican sauces that bring both heat and depth to any BBQ. From smoky chipotle to tangy green habanero, these sauces enhance the flavour of meats and vegetables alike.

CHEF TALK

Jack Godik, executive chef at Sucre shares his favourite BBQ serves



Nothing beats a hefty beef ribeye on the bone to impress your guests. Sweetcorn also has to be one of my favourite vegetables to grill, as well as aubergine as it takes on the smoky BBQ flavour so well. Asparagus is also one of my favourites when in season.

There are two sides that I always serve when I'm hosting a BBQ. Elotes is a classic Mexican streetfood dish which is corn on the cob charred on the grill and smothered in a cheesy, spicy sauce. Super easy to make and so delicious. The other is Romano peppers (or normal red bell peppers) blackened on the grill. Then peeled and dressed with some Moscatel vinegar and a good olive oil.

My favourite marinade whenever I'm grilling chicken involves a version of a miso marinade. If I'm feeling time pressured, I'll just smother the chicken in miso and leave it in the fridge for a couple hours. To make it more interesting you can add things like preserved lemon, rosemary and garlic.



Time to experiment

No barbecue spread is complete without flavourful rubs and marinades, and Field Blends' range – complete with tried and tested flavour combinations – is ripe for foodie exploration this summer. "We try not to make too many specific pairing suggestions as we want the tins to inspire impromptu flavour combos on the campsite and kitchen," begins Connor Field, director.

"I don't think sweet and spicy is going anywhere. Hot honey has been doing the rounds for some time but I still think it's going to be huge for 2025. We have our Maple Chilli Salt, where smokey chipotle and organic dried maple just pop off together and I honestly just eat it straight up on buttered bread sometimes."

Corn on the cob, charred on the barbecue, is a great vehicle for seasonings. "We've mixed up a maple chilli butter to glaze things like that before. You could also pretty much burn (or one might say delicately char) some leeks on an open campfire and hit them with our Lemon Sumac blend for a fresh and zingy hit on the smoky sweet leek.

"Our Coffee BBQ blend adds an amazing crust to slow cooked meats, while the Soy, Ginger & Sesame blend can be used as an instant noodle finisher to take it up a level, or as a marinade on mushrooms/poultry if you have more time."

RETAILER VIEWPOINT



Lord Newborough of Rhug Estate explains how the estate's retail team are approaching barbecue season this year

TOP SELLERS

Our top-selling BBQ-related products in summer include marinated chicken kebabs, spare ribs, steak boxes and gourmet burgers. These items are incredibly popular due to their ease of preparation and suitability for outdoor cooking, which aligns perfectly with summer gatherings.

KEY FOCUSES FOR SUMMER 2025

This season, we are keen on capitalising on trending flavours such as spicy and smoky BBQ sauces and marinades, as well as plant-based alternatives to cater to the growing vegetarian and vegan market which are offered at our takeaway in the farm shop. Additionally, we are offering specials cooked and presented by our chef in the farm cafe at Rhug Estate.

HOW TO SELL BARBECUE FOOD

Effective selling techniques for BBQ products include engaging in-store displays that highlight our bestsellers, offering samples, and utilizing seasonal promotions. Point-of-sale (POS) materials featuring recipe ideas and pairing suggestions create excitement and encourage impulse purchases. Social media promotions and interactive cook-along events also enhance customer engagement and drive sales during the peak BBQ season.

> "Social media promotions and interactive cook-along events enhance customer engagement and drive sales during the peak BBQ season"

STOCK CHECK

SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE · 2025



BORNIBUS AIOLI

The perfect summery accompaniment to fish and seafood for a Mediterranean touch.

augustenoel.co.uk



SPICE KITCHEN RAS EL HANOUT

An award-winning blend of warm, fragrant spices that works perfectly with fish, meat and vegetables.

spicekitchenuk.com



TRACKLEMENTS SWEET MUSTARD KETCHUP

This sauce has everything. A thick texture that clings to burgers and hot dogs, a bright sweetness, and an undercurrent of heat from smooth and wholegrain mustard. Great in a potato salad too.

tracklements.co.uk



COTTAGE DELIGHT HICKORY SMOKED BARBECUE SAUCE

Velvety, sweet and sticky, this rich, indulgent barbecue sauce combines juicy tomatoes, sticky honey and a delicate blend of herbs and spices.

cottagedelight.co.uk



CONDIMANIAC SMOKEY DRAGON SEASONING & RUB

The flavour experts' most popular sauce as a seasoning. The rub contains a serious amount of quality chipotle flakes, bringing spice and smoke to meat, fish, vegetables and halloumi.

condimaniac.com



FIREFLY BBQ BLACK MAGIC CHARCOAL BEEF RUB

Elevate your grilling with this sweet, caramelly, subtly garlicky rub, made with activated charcoal to give steaks and briskets a distinctive colour.

fireflybbq.co.uk





FARM SHOP & DELI SHOW 2025

Farm Shop & Deli Show is the must-attend event of the year for independent food and drink retailers, buyers and suppliers

This year's show, taking place at the NEC Birmingham from Monday 7th to Wednesday 9th April, will give visitors the chance to be educated and inspired, and to see and sample the latest innovations in the food and drink market.

Farm Shop & Deli Show is one of four events taking place over the three days under the UK Food & Drink Shows banner, and brings together hundreds of suppliers to showcase the best of speciality produce to retailers and buyers.

The other events that make up the UK Food & Drink Shows are: National Convenience Show, which provides a platform for the convenience retailing sector; Food & Drink Expo, which covers the retail, hospitality, wholesale, foodservice and manufacturing sectors; Foodex Manufacturing Solutions, the leading trade event for processing, packaging and logistics.

Across the four events, around 30,000 visitors and 1,500 exhibitors will come together to network, see the latest innovations and gather invaluable information.

Once again, UK Food & Drink Shows will feature a packed programme of expert speakers, insightful panels and inspiring demonstrations on topics and trends that are driving the industry.

Among the many speakers and panels that independent food and drink businesses won't want to miss are:

- **Lovingly Artisan Bakery, 2024 Farm Shop & Deli Retailer of the Year**, on building an award-winning business (Monday 7th April, 2:15pm)
- A panel discussion on how farm shops are driving sustainable practices, and the impact these may have on profits (Tuesday 8th April, 10:45am)
- **Alex Emmanuel-Jones joins host Nigel Barden** for The Future of Farm Shops (Tuesday 8th April, 1:45pm)
- A former senior retail leader on why he left his high-profile career to take over The Bakewell Tart Shop (Wednesday 9th April, 10:45am)
- Dragons' Pantry sessions featuring brave entrepreneurs making 15-minute pitches for their new products to industry experts (each day, various times)

Alongside these are a host of competitions including the Britain's Best Loaf and Britain's Best Cake contests (see p48).

The evolution and innovation of the UK Food & Drink Shows is one reason it was last year crowned 'Best UK Tradeshow more than 8,000 sq m' in the Association of Event Organisers Excellence Awards. That innovation continues this year with the introduction of new themed areas:



- **Future Food Zone** is a significant expansion and evolution of the successful Healthy & Natural zone from previous years. It will offer a broader and more diverse range of innovative food and drink products from on-trend categories across keto, kombucha, fermented foods, whole foods, CBD, functional foods and more. This enhanced focus reflects the growing consumer demand for healthier, more sustainable, and innovative food options.
- **Coffee Zone** has been launched in partnership with The London Coffee Festival to reflect consumers developing more sophisticated palates, and demanding high-quality, consistent coffee. This area will play host to the latest innovations in the coffee industry including top roasters, alternative milks and the most sustainable cups.
- **Packaging Zone** will be a one-stop-shop for food and drink businesses seeking solutions to their packaging and plastic challenges, with an emphasis on sustainable solutions. This zone will allow industry professionals to connect with one another, share circular economy ideas, meet solutions providers and discover ground-breaking plastic

UK FOOD & DRINK SHOW **SUPPORTERS**

BIRA
BIRA represents thousands of independent retail businesses across the UK, from single outlets to small chains, large department stores and agricultural dealerships.

CRAFT BAKERS ASSOCIATION
The CBA works to share knowledge and promote craft skills and helps to make sure its members are connected to the latest industry news. CBA members have free access to services including expert advice on HR, employment law, health and food safety.

DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS & TRADE
The UK's Department for Business and Trade is an economic growth department. It works to ensure fair, competitive markets at home, secure access to new markets abroad and support businesses to invest, export and grow.

FARM RETAIL ASSOCIATION
The Farm Retail Association champions farm shops and farmers' markets from across the UK. It is proud to support and inspire the people and businesses who grow and sell great British food.

FDF
The FDF brings together business, government and stakeholders to ensure manufacturers have the right conditions to grow, invest and employ while continuing to produce high-quality, nutritious and affordable food and drink.

THE BRITISH SOFT DRINKS ASSOCIATION
Members of the BSDA have access to the association's technical and public affairs teams to help them navigate the difficult technical, regulatory and environmental challenges currently facing the industry.

THE GARDEN CENTRE ASSOCIATION
The GCA asks its members to meet the highest retail standards and to participate in an annual inspection process to ensure these standards are maintained and improved. GCA members set the benchmark for high retailing standards within the industry.

THE GIFTWARE ASSOCIATION
The Giftware Association is the national trade association serving the home and gift industry.

THE GUILD OF FINE FOOD
The Guild of Fine Food has a mission to support, celebrate and encourage independent food and drink retailers and the producers that supply them.

THE VEGAN TRADEMARK
The Vegan Trademark is an internationally recognised vegan product certification. It was established in 1990 by The Vegan Society and has been helping make vegan products more accessible ever since.





reduction innovations to implement into their own business.

● **Business Advice Hub**, a dedicated area providing exhibitors and visitors to the show with access to free business advice and services.

Alongside the new zones will be established favourite, the Plant-based Zone. Supported by The Vegan Society, this will offer vegan and plant-based products, including meat alternatives, snacks, drinks and ingredients.

Also new for this year will be two dedicated street food areas serving a wide selection of exciting dishes and snacks.

To ensure visitors make the most of their visit, an online digital event companion will offer a comprehensive event guide, interactive floorplan, seamless indoor navigation and real-time notifications (see p49).

UK Food & Drink Shows is organised by market-leading business information provider





William Reed. Covering industries ranging from food and drink to pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, William Reed publishes digital and print media including *The Grocer*, and organises prestigious awards, business events and conferences.

"We look forward to once again welcoming visitors and exhibitors to the UK Food & Drink Shows in April," said William Reed exhibitions managing director Andrew Reed.

"At a time of continuing challenges in the shape of high input prices and rising employment costs, alongside the pressure on consumer spending, the shows offer an opportunity to gain invaluable insight and inspiration. From expert panels and presentations to face-to-face meetings with peers and industry associations, the UK Food & Drink Shows can help equip your business with the tools to flourish."

PANELS AND PRESENTATIONS

Some of the UK Food & Drink Shows panels and presentations retailers and buyers won't want to miss.

MONDAY 7TH APRIL

FROM LOCKDOWN TO AWARD-WINNING: BUILDING A BUSINESS AND MAKING IT A SUCCESS
11AM, FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
An exclusive interview with 2024 Farm Shop & Deli Retailer Awards Newcomer of the Year The Cheesy Living Co.

THE CONVENIENCE SHOPPER: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
11AM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE
Food and drink insight experts Lumina Intelligence offers the latest data and insight on the convenience shopper.

THE FEMALE LEADERS SHAPING CONVENIENCE
11:45AM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE
This session puts the spotlight on some of the most inspiring and influential women in the UK convenience retail sector. Find out how their careers began, the challenges they overcame and the advice they would share to aspiring women.

A RETAILER'S GUIDE TO BUILDING BIGGER BASKETS
12:45PM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE
Join this session to hear how simple changes to core categories can support building bigger baskets if the right range is executed in the right place in your stores.

CLAIRE POINTON: EXPANDING THE POSSIBILITIES OF DELIVERY
12:45PM, THE GROCER STAGE
Claire Pointon, managing director at Just Eat, on working with retailers, grocers, independents and brands to tap into audiences they might not otherwise reach.

> "I would recommend that people come to the Farm Shop & Deli Show if they're starting out with a farm shop or a deli, or if they're an established business, because there's such a huge variety of stands that you can really learn something and improve your business"
>
> **EMMA MOSELY, CHAIR, FARM RETAIL ASSOCIATION**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW CAN I GET TO THE NEC?
By road: The NEC is situated at the hub of the UK motorway network, enabling visitors to travel directly from the M6, M1, M40 and M42. Pre-book your parking to save time and money at: www.thenec.co.uk/visitors/parking-at-the-nec/
By rail: The NEC is served by Birmingham International Railway Station, connected by a covered bridge link. Travel time from London is 90 minutes and trains run directly to many regional towns and cities. For details of train routes and timetables, contact National Rail enquiries on +44 (0) 8457 484950 or look up nationalrail.co.uk

WHERE IN THE NEC ARE THE INDIVIDUAL SHOWS LOCATED?
- **Farm Shop & Deli Show** (Hall 20)
- **Food & Drink Expo** (Hall 17 and 18)
- **National Convenience Show** (Hall 19)
- **Foodex Manufacturing Solutions** (Hall 6 and Hall 7)

HOW CAN I REGISTER TO ATTEND THE SHOWS?
Registrations for Farm Shop & Deli Show are now open and FREE for anyone in the trade. Please visit farmshopanddelishow.co.uk

CAN I ATTEND THE OTHER UK FOOD & DRINK SHOWS?
Yes, registering for one show allows you free access to all four UK Food & Drink Shows: Food & Drink Expo, Farm Shop & Deli Show, National Convenience Show and Foodex Manufacturing Solutions.

CAN I VISIT ON MORE THAN ONE DAY?
Yes, once registered you can come along any day and your ticket allows you in on multiple days.



WHO CAN ATTEND?
As an industry event, the UK Food & Drink Shows are open to trade visitors, industry professionals, and businesses involved in the food and beverage sector. This includes retailers, foodservice professionals, hospitality professionals, distributors and wholesalers, producers and manufacturers.

As this is a trade-only event all visitors will be vetted in advance and entry is not guaranteed to the shows until you receive your visitor confirmation email.

CAN MY CHILDREN VISIT THE EVENT WITH ME?
Unfortunately, we do not permit entry to anyone under the age of 18 as this is a trade-only event. We do have exceptions for breastfeeding mothers or if you are a parent and need to bring a young baby with you. Please contact antonia.green@wrbm.com for more information. Please note however that pushchairs are not allowed.

IS THE VENUE ACCESSIBLE?
We've worked tirelessly to make our venue fully accessible to all our guests. Visit the NEC website for more information.

IS THERE A CLOAKROOM AT THE EVENT?
Yes. Cloakrooms are open 30 minutes before the show opens, until the close of show. Coats, bags, suitcases and umbrellas will be permitted in the cloakroom at the daily cost £2 per coat or umbrella £3 per bag or piece of luggage.



DRAGONS' PANTRY
1PM, FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
Watch and learn as brave entrepreneurs meet fearsomely experienced industry 'dragons' to make their 15-minute pitch.

FOOD TO GO TRENDS IN 2025: FOODSERVICE VS RETAIL
1:30PM, THE GROCER STAGE
Insight experts Lumina Intelligence identify where consumers are going for their food-to-go, what they are buying, why they are buying it, how much they are spending, how frequently they are visiting and more.

LOVINGLY ARTISAN: THE KEY TO BUILDING AN AWARD-WINNING STORE
2:15PM, FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
Farm Shop & Deli Retailer of the Year 2024, Aidan Monks of Lovingly Artisan Bakery, on what makes Lovingly Artisan stand out from the crowd, his views on the future of the industry and how Lovingly Artisan is adapting to the challenges the sector is facing.

PLANT-BASED: KEEPING IT CLEAN
2:15PM, THE GROCER STAGE
Plant-based experts unpick the category, the barriers to growth and the trends shaping the future.

TRENDS TO WATCH: THE FUTURE OF FOOD AND DRINK
2:30PM, FOOD MANUFACTURE STAGE
What will the UK food and drink market look like in 2026? How will consumer and market behaviour evolve and what impact will it have?

MORRISONS: THE FUTURE OF CONVENIENCE
2:45PM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE
Morrisons' wholesale and franchise director Paul Dobson on the retailer's plans to grow its estate to 2,000 outlets by the end of 2025 and the wider trends impacting the UK convenience retail sector.

TUESDAY 8TH APRIL

FARM SHOPS: A FORCE FOR NATURE
10:45AM, FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
This expert panel discusses consumer expectations around sustainable practices, whether sustainability needs to impact profit and looks at how leading retailers are driving change.

BOOTHS: CATERING FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS
11AM, THE GROCER STAGE
Booths managing director Nigel Murray discusses the state of the UK food and drink market, the changing needs of consumers, the growth of Booths, plans for the future and the importance of catering to your customers and how you need to buck the trends to do so.

WIN BIG WITH TIKTOK SHOP
11:45AM, THE GROCER STAGE
TikTok Shop has been establishing itself as one of the fastest growing e-commerce places in the market. This talk will look at how to launch and grow your business through this channel.

MASTERING SOCIAL MEDIA: YOUR STORY IS YOUR SUPERPOWER
11:45AM, RESTAURANT STAGE
In this masterclass, we'll uncover systems, hacks, and frameworks that leverage social media psychology to build authority, engage your audience, and amplify your impact.

DRAGONS' PANTRY
12:30PM, FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
Watch and learn as brave entrepreneurs meet fearsomely experienced industry 'dragons' to make their 15-minute pitch.



UK EATING OUT MARKET: CONSUMER AND MARKET TRENDS TO WATCH
12:30PM, RESTAURANT STAGE
Lumina Intelligence shares data and insight from its Eating and Drinking Out Panel to help you make informed decisions.

REDUCING FOOD WASTE: THE FUTURE OF FROZEN FOOD
1:15PM, FOOD MANUFACTURE STAGE
This session will look at reducing food waste through modified atmosphere packaging (MAP), enhancing sustainability by using recyclable plastics and reduced headspace, and smart cryogenic freezing.

THE FEMALE LEADERS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF GROCERY
1:45PM, THE GROCER STAGE
Hearing from influential, inspiring women leaders that are paving the way. Learn about their journey, what they have achieved and be inspired to make a positive change in your business.

ALEX EMMANUEL-JONES: THE FUTURE OF FARM SHOPS
1:45PM, FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
Raised in an entrepreneurial family, Alex witnessed the creation of the multi-award-winning Black Farmer brand, sparking his passion for business and high-quality food. Now, he is driving its growth while championing diversity, innovation, and resilience in British food and farming.



COMPETITIONS AT THE UK FOOD & DRINK SHOWS

Competitions are always a big part of the UK Food & Drink Shows line-up, and this year is no exception.

BRITAIN'S BEST CAKE
MONDAY 7TH APRIL, 3.15PM - THE GROCER STAGE
A celebration of the wonderful cake Britain has to offer, this competition is for professional bakers, and is judged by professional bakers and industry experts. It comprises eight categories, including the new Innovation category that celebrates out-of-the-box thinking. Live judging will take place at the UK Food & Drink Shows on the morning of Monday 7 April, and will assess each cake on appearance, aroma, and (most importantly) taste. Winners will be announced that afternoon, with each category champion vying for the ultimate title of Britain's Best Cake 2025.

FARM SHOP & DELI RETAILER AWARDS
MONDAY 7TH APRIL, 3.15PM - FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
These prestigious awards are an annual celebration of Britain's independent specialist food and drink retailers and attract hundreds of entries from across the industry. The entries have been whittled down to a shortlist of 52 finalists who will learn on Monday 7 April whether they have been selected as one of the winners across seven categories and seven regions. Awards will also be given for Newcomer of the Year and the ultimate accolade of Retailer of the Year.

BRITAIN'S BEST LOAF
TUESDAY 8TH APRIL, 3.15PM - FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
Returning for its 12th year, the competition will again recognise and reward the very best of British bread. Entries are judged by industry experts and professional bakers across eight categories: Flavoured Sourdough, Gluten-Free, Innovation, International, Sourdough, Seeded Sourdough, White and Wholegrain. This year sees the introduction of Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals in each category, giving even more loaves the opportunity to shine. Live judging will take place on Tuesday 8 April, with the winners announced in the afternoon.

FARM SHOP & DELI PRODUCT AWARDS
MEET THE WINNERS: WEDNESDAY 9TH APRIL, 2PM - FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
The Farm Shop & Deli Product Awards will once again recognise the finest products in the specialist retail sector. A panel of expert judges comprising leading retailers, wholesale buyers and other industry professionals will appraise all aspects of each entry, including the full value chain and branding, ensuring products are not only appealing but are also well-placed for retail success. Winners will be announced in the run-up to the UK Food & Drink Shows, with winning products showcased at the event. On Wednesday 9th April visitors will have a chance to meet some of the producers of winning products and hear their stories.



> Small businesses need to get out and the Farm Shop & Deli Show is a fantastic opportunity to meet like-minded people. Whether they're suppliers to that sector or whether they're other farm shops or other delis. Get out, talk to people, learn and grow your business
>
> **PAUL HARGREAVES, CEO, COTSWOLD FAYRE**

RETAILERS' DEN
2PM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE
Entrepreneurs stand in front our panel of convenience store experts and make their 15-minute pitch.

BREAKING BARRIERS: SUCCEEDING IN FOOD & DRINK AS AN UNDERREPRESENTED FOUNDER
2:45PM, THE GROCER STAGE
This session provides real, practical insights from underrepresented founders who have successfully launched and grown their food and drink brands.

A LABOUR GOVERNMENT: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR HOSPITALITY?
3:15PM, RESTAURANT STAGE
Leading trade organisations discuss the last 12 months and what a Labour government could mean for hospitality going forward.

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS: GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND
3:15PM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE
Come and be inspired by the stories of retailers that are pulling out the stops for their local communities and find out the impact it is having on their businesses.

PLANT-BASED: INSIGHTS FROM THE US MARKET
3:30PM, THE GROCER STAGE
Noah Hyams, founder of Vegpreneur, shares the latest vegan and plant-based insights from across the Atlantic. Understand the trends shaping the US market, how they differ to the UK and the key to unlocking export potential.

WEDNESDAY 9TH APRIL

RETAIL CRIME: THE TRUE COST TO CONVENIENCE
10:45AM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE
Retailers that have been victims of crime discuss the impact it has had on their businesses, how they have responded and what more needs to be done to address the issue.

THE BAKEWELL TART SHOP: BALANCING HERITAGE AND GROWTH
10:45AM, FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE
In 2019, former senior retail leader Duncan Kirk left his high-profile career to take over The Bakewell Tart Shop, which has been the home of

DIGITAL EVENT COMPANION APP

The UK Food & Drink Shows Digital Event Companion app is designed to transform the way visitors interact with the event.

Once visitors have registered, they will receive a link to download the app, from which they can access their ticket and make use of a host of other features:

- **COMPREHENSIVE DIGITAL SHOW GUIDE**
Visitors have the show at their fingertips with an exhibitor directory, product listings and live event schedules all within the app. They can plan their day before the show begins, exploring and bookmarking their favourites to make the most of every moment.
- **SEAMLESS INDOOR NAVIGATION**
The interactive map ensures efficient and stress-free exploration, guiding visitors directly to exhibitors, live events, and amenities.
- **REAL-TIME UPDATES**
Visitors stay in the loop with instant push notifications for live events they've favourited.
- **APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING**
Visitors can book in meetings in advance, view the schedule at a glance and navigate to stands easily for appointments.



GOJUTE

STAND K251

GoJute are the leading UK sustainable bag manufacturer, specializing in Jute, Juco, and Cotton-branded bags. Their bags serve as walking advertisements while showcasing your business's commitment to sustainability. With over 40 years of expertise, GoJute offer a range of over 200 styles, with a turnaround in as little as 48 hours. Whether for a tradeshow, event, or product launch, GoJute ensures your tote bags are ready when you need them. Proud to be the sponsor for this year's Farm Shop & Deli Retailer Awards Jute Bags, and supporting businesses in their mission towards sustainability without compromising on effective branding.
gojute.co.uk



BYRUBY

STAND H200



Delicious food ready when you are, that's what ByRuby is all about. The award-winning brand's dishes are cooked by hand using great ingredients: British chicken, grass-fed British beef and sustainably sourced fish. No hidden nasties – just ingredients a good home cook would have in their pantry. ByRuby prepares all its meals fresh, before fast freezing, 'pressing pause' on the flavour and nourishment until you're ready to 'press play' again in time for lunch or dinner.
byruby.co.uk

DELAMERE

STAND K309

Delamere will be showcasing its range of award-winning flavoured milks on stand K309. Its 500ml glass bottles of flavoured milk are well known by visitors, and Delamere will be promoting its younger sibling at the show, 240ml glass bottles of the same great-tasting products. Available in strawberry, chocolate, banana, iced coffee and salted caramel flavours, there's something for everyone! These little bottles are ideal for 'out of home' opportunities in cafes, delis, farm shops and convenience stores. Delamere flavoured milk sales are up 15% in the last 12 months, ahead of the 10.4% growth seen in the convenience sector. Why not visit the Delamere stand and grab your slice of the flavoured milk action?!
delameredairy.co.uk



DRIVERS PICKLES

STAND F251

Drivers Pickles are a fifth-generation family business and a BRC AA grade production facility in Leicester. Drivers have been producing award winning pickles, relishes and chutneys since 1906. Their Deli range stands at 22 delicious products aimed at the fine food sector. Combining the finest ingredients with vinegars from around the world to produce a range of traditional family products with a contemporary twist. Many products are gluten-free, certified vegan or vegetarian and all packaging is fully recyclable and available in retail, catering and gift options.
press@pickle-lovers.co.uk



BOOJA-BOOJA

STAND P259

Booja-Booja returns this year with an array of award-winning delights and exciting new products. The pioneering Norfolk confectioner picked up an impressive six wins at this year's Farm Shop & Deli Product Awards, including two Silvers and two Golds for its bite-sized treat range, Chocolate Wonders. Two irresistible new flavours of Chocolate Wonders will be available to try at this year's show, alongside samples of other delicious, innovative new products. Everything Booja-Booja makes is dairy-free, gluten-free, vegan and organic. Discover its exquisite truffles, ice creams and new launches for yourself at stand P259.

boojabooja.com



SHEPHERDS PURSE CHEESES

STAND K219



Shepherds Purse produce a range of internationally award-winning cheeses, made using the finest quality sheep, cow, water buffalo milk on their family farm in North Yorkshire. Proudly independent and with an unwavering passion for excellence, their handcrafted products have can be found gracing the plates of some of the world's most famous events and restaurants including Wimbledon and The Ritz as well as being served to first class diners on British Airways, Qatar Airways, Emirates fights.

shepherdspurse.co.uk

PANCRACIO

STAND L189



Founded in 2005 in Valencia, Pancracio creates premium chocolate using the world's finest cocoa and 100% natural ingredients – free from artificial additives, preservatives and gluten. Committed to purity, Pancracio offers health-conscious consumers a guilt-free indulgence while maintaining exceptional quality. Through its Cocca Commitment, the brand champions sustainability, ethical sourcing, and fair working conditions. By blending traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation, Pancracio enhances Spain's chocolate reputation and promotes eco-conscious indulgence. Pancracio's Product Range of luxury chocolates, including chocolate bars, pralines and caramelised nuts, hot chocolate, and premium gifting options. Beautifully presented, the gift boxes are perfect for high-end gifting, corporate occasions, and the luxury retail market.

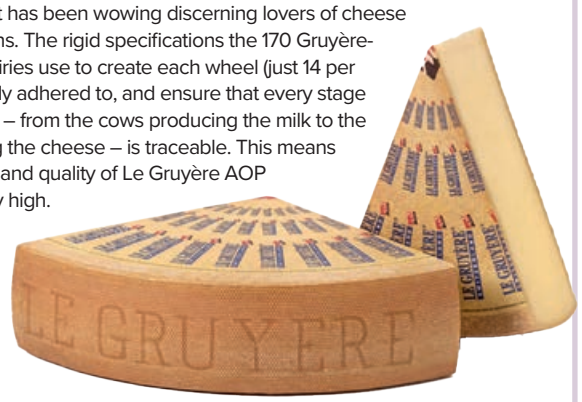
gourmetpartners.co.uk

LE GRUYÈRE AOP

STAND M241

In Gruyère, 900 years of tradition and provenance come together to produce one of Europe's best-loved cheeses, Le Gruyère AOP. A Continental cheese from Switzerland, it has been wowing discerning lovers of cheese for generations. The rigid specifications the 170 Gruyère-producing dairies use to create each wheel (just 14 per day) are strictly adhered to, and ensure that every stage of production – from the cows producing the milk to the affineur aging the cheese – is traceable. This means that the taste and quality of Le Gruyère AOP is consistently high.

gruyere.com





the famous Bakewell Tart for more than 100 years. In this interview he discusses how he has balanced heritage with growth to transform the business into a seven-figure operation.

PACKAGING UNWRAPPED: TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2025

11AM, FOOD MANUFACTURE STAGE

From business trends to materials and legislation, join our panel of industry experts and award-winning brands as we analyse the things that need to be on your radar.

SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS 2025: HOW TO STAY AHEAD OF THE GAME

11AM, THE GROCER STAGE

Learn where growth is happening, what audiences want and how to use AI to create impactful, future-proof content. This session will give actionable insights to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

WAITROSE: INVESTING £1BN INTO CONVENIENCE

11:30AM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE

Waitrose retail director Tina Mitchell discusses the retailer's plans to open 100 new Little Waitrose stores over the next five years, the convenience retail landscape as a whole, and the changing needs of consumers.

HOSPITALITY MENUS: WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT?

11:45AM, RESTAURANT STAGE

What ingredients are becoming more or less prevalent on menus? Is 'premium' making a comeback or is 'value' more important? Lumina Intelligence reveals the detail behind the menus.

DRAGONS' PANTRY

12:30PM, FARM SHOP & DELI STAGE

Witness the ultimate retail test as brave entrepreneurs meet fearsomely experienced industry 'dragons' to make their 15-minute pitch.

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT: Farm Shop & Deli Show
WHERE: NEC, Birmingham
WHEN: Monday 7th April: 10am-5pm, Tuesday 8 April: 10am-5pm,Wednesday 9 April: 10am-4pm
WEB: farmshopanddelishow.co.uk

DR DOLLY VAN TULLEKEN: NOURISHING BRITAIN

12:45PM, THE GROCER STAGE

In this session, leading public health expert Dr van Tulleken discusses what need to be done to tackle food-related ill health in the UK, both at an industry level and through tougher government intervention.

RISING STARS: WHO ARE THE RETAILERS CAUSING A STIR?

1:00PM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE

Who are the next generation of convenience store retailers and what makes them tick? Find out what they are doing differently, how they see the future of the industry, what motivates them and what advice they would share with their peers.

RETAILERS' DEN

2:15PM, CONVENIENCE STORE STAGE

Watch and learn as entrepreneurs stand in front our panel of convenience store experts and make their 15-minute pitch.

SUSTAINABILITY

William Reed, organiser of Farm Shop & Deli Show, is committed to significantly reducing its carbon footprint. Here are some the steps being taken to mitigate the environmental impact of the UK Food & Drink Shows:

RECYCLING /REDUCING WASTE

Recycling is at the forefront of William Reed's efforts to promote a more sustainable future. The business strongly encourages exhibitors and visitors to recycle wherever possible.

CARPETING

Exhibition carpet is used from 100% polypropylene fibres and is recycled after it has been used.

BADGES

By eliminating plastic badge holders, William Reed is contributing to the reduction of plastic waste and promoting a more sustainable approach to event management.

REDUCED PAPER

William Reed is using a Digital Event Companion where visitors can access a digital interactive floorplan, rather than a printed show guide.

FOOD WASTE

The UK Food & Drink Shows will partner with a food distribution charity to donate any surplus food to those in need, rather than throwing away good food.

ON-SITE MATERIALS

All PVC shell scheme sheets are recycled and all pallet wrap packaging used is made of 30% recycled content and is 100% recyclable. Show signage within the halls is completely PVC-free and is 100% recyclable.

To find out more and register for free tickets visit farmshopanddelishow.co.uk



> We come to the Farm Shop & Deli Show every year. I think it's vital. It allows us to build relationships with our current suppliers and also look for trends, because although you think you're on top of it, this is the place you need to come just to double check

CLAIRE COOK, GENERAL MANAGER, SUFFOLK FOOD HALL

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www.cheesesfromswitzerland.com



SWEET SOMETHINGS

Which puds and ice cream flavours are setting consumers' taste buds alight? *Speciality Food* finds out...

COMMENTATORS



CATHERINE MCNEILL
ICE CREAM ALLIANCE



ANDREW NIVEN
THE KNOWLEDGE BANK



GABRIEL BRAY
GOOD FOOD STUDIO



BEV BOTHA
TRAVELLING CUPCAKE



XAVIER PELLOUX
THE PATISSERIE BOX

HFSS regulations and a greater inclination to eat for our health and wellbeing are reshaping the food industry in the UK.

However, that hasn't stopped us being a nation of treat lovers! Us Brits love the cuddle of a sticky sponge pudding after a Sunday roast, and the tongue-tingling thrill of a pot of ice cream, eaten in snatched moments of bliss by the freezer. According to a 2024 Yougov study, 34% of adults indulge in a little something sweet every day, while it's also reported that (on average) each person in the UK eats a whopping nine litres of ice cream a year.

The big freeze

Nine litres per person is an enormous figure. So, where are all these British ice cream fanatics getting their fix? And which flavours have them reaching for the scoop?

According to Mintel, a key driver for ice cream sales in the UK is at-home entertaining. Many categories, including butchery and premium ready meals, have been impacted by the choice of diners to stay in and cook up a storm for their friends and family rather than going out.

And ice cream, as a dessert option, has huge appeal for the nostalgia factor, affordability and convenience.

Mintel says 46% of those who eat ice cream serve it to guests. They're buying, Mintel adds, brands with an artisanal offering and aspirational image, and two in three asked said they would rather eat less ice cream than compromise on quality.

Individual ice cream portions, premiumisation and clean, natural ingredient decks all get shoppers' votes right now, as do ice cream and gelato products appealing to special diets.

The future of the market, says Statista, is contradictory in this sense. While warmer weather increases ice cream consumption, there's also a drive to healthier habits, steering consumers away from dairy and sugary foods. "Additionally, concerns about animal welfare and the environment drive more and more people to become vegan or cut certain animal products out of their diet, although this doesn't preclude eating non-dairy ice cream," the analyst says.

"Shoppers are more health-conscious than ever and, while ice cream is traditionally seen as an indulgence, people want treats that deliver on more than just good taste," agrees Andrew Niven, strategic intelligence manager at The Knowledge Bank. "The demand for protein-enriched options, for example, is on the rise, with nearly 60% of consumers expressing interest in these types of products. In dairy, goat and sheep milks offer a point of difference, called out for their lower-than-cow lactose levels, making them more allergen-friendly."

As for flavours, Catherine McNeill, director of operations at the Ice Cream Alliance, says traditional favourites (chocolate, vanilla and strawberry) will always be top of the (ice) pops. "However, there's a growing interest in more adventurous, globally inspired options. Flavours like pistachio, matcha and ube (a vibrant purple yam) are gaining popularity, driven by social media influence and a rising appetite for unique culinary experiences."

Bite-sized products are also gaining favour in baskets, Catherine points out, saying they're being enjoyed by consumers who want to feel control over their portion sizes.

This is something Andrew has noted too. "The food-to-go market has seen a 26% year on year increase, pointing to a demand for quick, portable treats," he explains. "Retailers that offer single-serve and on-the-go items are more likely to attract incremental sales. Tied to all these trends is the growing emphasis on snacking within the ice cream category."

Cool innovation

As Catherine has already said, classic flavours will always be the biggest sellers in terms of volume within ice cream, but that doesn't mean innovation in flavour and format has stood still. Those consumers buying ice cream to indulge in at home are also very keen to expand their palates.

The sector is a 'blank canvas' for experimentation, Andrew continues, with inspiration coming from every corner of the world. "Italian gelato rubs shoulders with Afghan sheeryakh, Korean bingsu with Lebanese booza ashta, Malaysian yam and red bean potong with Turkish Donurma."

With such fast-moving innovation, even the mighty cone now has its challengers, Andrew adds. "Ice cream comes sandwiched between waffles and wafers, bagels and bao buns, piped into croissants and kouign amann, tacos and taiyaki. New York's Morgenstern's create ice cream pies, London's Chin Chin is a liquid nitrogen ice cream parlour!"

Delis and cafes are tapping into the ice cream craze in ever new ways too. As well as selling dinky individual pots, there's a move (where space allows) to offer premium soft serve, which Gabriel Bray, development manager at Good Food Studio, says is having a moment.

"From Flat Iron's complimentary brown butter Tahitia vanilla soft serve, to matcha latte cones served at specialist tea shops, the 'posh serve' is thriving. The Dreamery near Dalston is another exciting addition to London's ice cream scene, pairing indulgent ice cream coupes with quality wines – a combination we didn't know we needed."

Competition for shoppers, still reeling from the cost-of-living squeeze, will be fierce this summer, says Andrew. "But retailers who can incorporate products that meet these consumer preferences will be better placed for success in the coming season.

Pleasing puds

Nestle's recent professional report, *Breaking Dessert Barriers,* listed cheesecake (41%) as the UK's best-loved dessert, followed by ice cream/sundaes (38%) and chocolate fudge cake or brownies (33%) – all tapping into the ongoing desire for familiar comfort.

Bev Botha, founder of the Travelling Cupcake dessert bar says deep dish 'puddle' cookies are hitting the spot for her customers, who can't get enough of luxurious, freshly baked dough.

During winter, spiced caramel apple cinnamon buns top the list, taken over in summer by Eton Mess – a real classic that consumers crave as a taste of the season.

What makes these products most attractive, in her opinion, is depth of flavour, contrasting texture, and pure indulgence. "A truly great sweet treat should offer a balance of gooey richness, satisfying crunch, and a flavour sensation that keeps you coming back for more!"

Xavier Pelloux, director of product development at The Patisserie Box,



THE ONE TO **WATCH**

All eyes are on pistachio as THE key ingredient/flavour in ice cream and desserts this year. Sarah Hamouda sparked a global frenzy with her Dubai Chocolate Bar (chocolate, crispy pastry and pistachios) in 2021, and its influence continues to ripple across multiple categories.

Little Dessert Shop, which has outlets across the UK, launched its Dubai Drip collection earlier this year, reporting sales have been "nothing short of phenomenal", with products in the range setting new records throughout all its stores. This is a story echoed by many, many other retailers and producers.

"There's a real shift towards brands isolating single ingredients and turning them into their whole USP," says Good Food Studio, which points to major multiples such as M&S and Waitrose, which have gone in hard with pistachio-infused bakes and chocolate.

"It's become a well-established and much-loved flavour in the ice cream and frozen dessert industry,



ranking as the fourth most popular ice cream flavour," adds the Ice Cream Alliance. "Its rich, nutty taste, and premium appeal have made it a favourite among consumers seeking something indulgent yet sophisticated.

says customers are more considered in what they are buying for pudding today, and they really do appreciate an artisanal touch. "Ingredients are so important, especially for what we do here. For example, we use the best Italian cherries and fresh cream. Everything we make, we use the best components for."

As more customers read product labels, wary of ultra processed ingredients, real butter has become even more important in the pudding and dessert category. Xavier considers using oil a 'cost-cutting exercise'. "Everyone is entitled to their opinion," he explains, "and butter has increased in cost hugely in the last 12 months or more, but I would rather use this for a better-quality end product."

This is what matters to shoppers in a speciality setting, which is why Xavier says retailers should look closely at ingredient decks and speak to suppliers about what goes into their desserts and cakes before choosing what they might stock.

"I know all our 85 products inside out. How they are made, where the ingredients come from, and what the quaility of the end result will be. In the end, the consumer will pay a little bit more for that quality and taste, and what they get out of it."

Products the chef is seeing a hot demand for right now include a whole host of classics, which just goes to show that the proof is in the pudding when it comes to trends. Customers are getting in touch to order the likes of lemon tarts and Black Forest gateaux. However, new trends are creeping in. Even this business, renowned for its European-style patisserie, hasn't been untouched by the Dubai Chocolate Bar/pistachio craze. "It's definitely something I'm keeping my eye on," Xavier says.





THE **VALUE** OF THE UK **ICE CREAM** MARKET SHOULD REACH **£2 BILLION** IN **2028**

MINTEL

5 DESSERT TRENDS TO KNOW IN 2025

- **HEALTHIER OPTIONS**
  Consumers want desserts lower in sugar, fat and calories, but made with natural ingredients. There's also a desire for dairy-free and egg-free options catering for both allergy sufferers and vegans
- **SUSTAINABILITY**
  Consumers want products that are made in a sustainable way, with responsibly sourced ingredients
- **GLOBAL FLAVOURS**
  From Japanese mochi to Middle Eastern baklava, the UK dessert market is open to diversity
- **CONVENIENCE**
  A significant driver. Busy lifestyles mean ready-to-eat and easy dessert options in single-serve portions are taking off
- **PREMIUMISATION**
  Shoppers will pay more for an elevated, unique, luxurious dessert experience



STOCK CHECK



BEARS ICE CREAM BLUEBERRY, LAVENDAR JAM, MERINGUE SWIRL

Fresh to the wholesale market, having run two successful parlours, the brand is renowned for its chef-made, truly artisan and imaginative combinations.

bearsicecream.co.uk



CAKEHEAD PISTACHIO CAKE

One of the maker's finest round cakes. A moist pistachio sponge, generously topped with all-butter pistachio frosting and finished with roasted, nibbed pistachios.

cakehead.co.uk



TRELEAVENS STRAWBERRIES & CREAM

From field to bowl. A luscious ice cream made with locally sourced Cornish milk, ripe berries and extra Cornish cream.

treleavens.co.uk



BROOKE'S DAIRY CHOCOLATE

Indulgent natural chocolate ice cream, made using milk from the herd of 100 pedigree Jersey cows on the family farm in Wales.

brooksdairy.com



BURTREE PUDDINGS GLUTEN-FREE STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING

This maker is known for its gorgeously sticky puds. And this one is no exception, designed for gluten allergen sufferers, made with rice, potato and tapioca flour. It's light and indulgent.

burtreepuddings.co.uk



BABOO GELATO MADAGASCAN VANILLA GELATO

Award-winning, silky gelato. Baboo's version marries organic milk with Madagascan vanilla pearl – a paste made of vanilla seeds and pods to maximise flavour.

baboogelato.com



DELICIOUS DESSERT CO CHOCOLATE & CARAMEL POTS

A pair of heavenly chocolate pots, mixing decadent salted caramel sauce with a rich chocolate mousse and chunky chocolate pieces.

thedeliciousdessertcompany.com



JUST DESSERTS WHITE CHOCOLATE & ORANGE CHEESECAKE

A sweet citrussy twist on the classic cheesecake, balancing creamy white chocolate with the vivid freshness of orange.

just-desserts.co.uk



CARTMEL VILLAGE SHOP STICKY BANANA PUDDING

The maker's classic sticky toffee pudding, with a nostalgic hit of banana.

cartmelvillaeshop.co.uk



SIMPLY ICE CREAM HEAVENLY HONEYCOMB

A best-selling all-natural, thick, rich and super creamy ice cream with pieces of real honeycomb.

simplyicecream.co.uk

TRENDSETTERS

COMING SOON...



PRODUCERS

Are you a Trendsetter? We are looking for innovative and trending products to feature in the next issue. Get in touch for further details..

RETAILERS

Look out for the May Issue where we showcase 2025 trends and the products to stock.

For more information contact:
louise.barnes@artichokehq.com 01206 508629



FINAL CALL

Spring is springing, and that's fantastic news for independents.

A rise in temperature makes customers more eager to get outside, and more willing to linger a bit longer on the high street, tote bag in hand, exploring all the goodies the nation's speciality retailers have to offer.

If you're thinking of ways to capitalise on warmer days and longer spells of sunshine, we've got a few suggestions for you.

Firstly, bring that sunshine into your displays and offerings. It's been a long, gloomy, wet winter, and shoppers are looking for bright inspiration that bolsters their feelgood factor.

Weave pops of vibrant green, yellow and pastel pink through your window and merchandising displays, bring in a bit of foliage with potted plants, think about repositioning more colourful, spring and summer-related products, and ensure (if you have a restaurant, cafe or baked goods counter) that you're being mindful of what you make. Customers want to see rhubarb, luscious lemon curd, salads and tarts infused with local wild garlic and asparagus.

Secondly, don't underestimate the power of the picnic. As we've already said, Brits are chomping at the bit to get outside – they've probably been staring longingly at the hamper, blankets and melamine picnic plates for some time. Make picnicking a focal point in store, offering as large a range as you can of RTD soft drinks and canned cocktails, pre-prepared salads, dips, grazing platters and cheeseboards, and easy to grab snacks. If you're a farm shop with a farm trail or walking route, ensure these are spruced up and well signposted, and remind your customers about them on social media. Keeping picnickers on site increases the chances they'll spend more after a walk and lunch – on a coffee, or even bits and pieces for dinner.

And it's now time to think seriously about barbecue season too, with UK BBQ Week on the calendar for the first week of May this year. Hot trends for 2025 include pork tomahawks, Asian marinades, hot honey-infused sausages and flavoured butters to smother over steaks.

Have a happy selling season.

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

5 MINUTES WITH

TESS REED, FOUNDER OF ALL DRESSED UP



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
I would've loved to have studied psychology, and I also love to travel, so maybe a combination of the two (if that job even exists?!)

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
I worked for a local family friend who is an amazing caterer helping prepare for weddings and events during my school holidays. And then my first job out of university was working as an intern at The Coconut Collaborative, which involved sampling a whole lot of coconut yoghurt!

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Other food brands who are absolutely smashing it and creating a path for challenger brands. I look up to many, including the likes of Pip & Nut and Bold Bean.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
I've worked on some pretty interesting catering jobs doing brutal hours in the freezing cold!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
I love the development side, and playing around with new flavours and ingredients.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
Currently looking at the numbers and lots of spreadsheets!

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
I love how friendly most people are in the food industry, there's a real passion for what people do – which I haven't experienced in the same way in different industries.

TEA OR COFFEE? Tea!

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
Spaghetti vongole to start. Roast chicken with VERY buttery jacket potatoes, a green salad and bread sauce. Finished with a chocolate fondant with crunchie ice cream and raspberries.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
Try to always put things into perspective, and enjoy as much of it as you can!

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
Sea urchins whilst I was in China, never again!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
The Heart's Invisible Fury by John Boyne.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Savoury every time!

BE CONNECTED



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linkedin.com/company/speciality-food

specialityfoodmagazine

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SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

Inside the next issue of Speciality Food

- Trendsetters
- Summer Drinks
- Oils, Vinegars & Dressings
- Crisps & Bagged Snacks
- Outdoor Eating centrespread
- Condiments





CHEESE BUYER 2025 ISSUE COMING SOON

For more information contact:
louise.barnes@artichokehq.com 01206 508629

TRIED & TESTED

SMASH FOODS
RASPBERRY CHIA FRUIT SPREAD
We're all leading busy lives, and we're all conscious of what we put into our bodies, and products that provide health benefits without needing to add or take away from our usual habits and preferences tick a lot of boxes in 2025. Smash Foods' Raspberry Chia Fruit Spread is the perfect example; an easy switch-out for conventional raspberry jam but with the added health boost of chia seeds, it's delicious on toast, with porridge, and however else you enjoy your jams. All that, and it contains no added sugar.
atlanteuk.co.uk



LOUISEBEES SOMERSET BEES' RAW SOFT CREAMED HONEY
A great quality honey is undoubtedly one of the finer things in life, particularly when you consider the headlines about the dark side of mass-produced honey, so this jar from Louisebees holds a much-loved place in my store cupboard. I've been using it in place of sugar for all manner of drinks and dishes, and its raw credentials mean that every health-giving part of the honey is retained for my family and I to benefit from. Created by lovingly cared for bees in Frome, Somerset, this honey satisfies the growing demand for both ethics and taste.
louisebees.com



POCO PICANTE SALSA CHIPOTLE
All too often salsas can be overly (and unnecessarily) sweet, which is one reason why I was delighted to discover Poco Picante's two-strong range of 100% natural and no-added-sugar salsas in squeezy pouches. The chipotle option was particularly appetising, bringing a subtle smokiness to all manner of dishes – we even tried it as a base for a Mexican-inspired pizza – and the fact that it's suitable for both vegans and those following a gluten-free diet makes it even better. It's not too chunky, either, which helps with its delicious versatility.
pocopicante.co.uk



THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Josh Barnes of Chef's Table with Josh Barnes at Swinton Estate



We're based in the Cookery School at Swinton Estate near Masham in North Yorkshire. This is perfectly set up for our countertop delivery of my cooking style, which is a bit of a mix of the classic with the modern. Chef's Table is all about seasonality with a menu that changes every week and it's driven by the ingredients we can source from the Estate – especially the fantastic game – and from the local Yorkshire area.

Everything is pretty much right on our doorstep as the Estate itself is 20,000 acres – that's plenty to inspire our menus! Swinton is a bit of a food lover's paradise, and we have an 'estate to plate' ethos across all of the restaurants, including Chef's Table.

It's very important for us to work closely with all our suppliers of Chef's Table ingredients.The menu at Chef's Table is very ingredient led and even though this changes weekly, we don't have to go too far for anything we need. What we can't source from the Estate itself, we get from brilliant local suppliers – this might be local cider, rapeseed oil, cheese...

As we're prepping each dish in front of our twelve guests, we talk about producers and suppliers of different ingredients that are going onto a plate. We describe what it is that guests are about to eat, including where the produce has come from and if relevant, the people involved in making or supplying the ingredients. We're proud to celebrate the best of Yorkshire during every service.

We work with Cryer & Stott who are local cheese producers and suppliers based out of Castleford. They do some pretty exciting, really mature cheeses and make cheese for the Royal family.

Then there's Thornborough Cider about five or so miles away – like us, they're located on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales (near Ripon). This is a small batch craft cider made from local apples, all from a small barn. We serve Thornborough's Prosecco-style cider in a flute glass as a fruity and aromatic sparkling welcome drink (and it's on the drinks menu, too).

And where Swinton ends, the farmland of R&J begins – their farm in Nidderdale is called Waterford Farm. They are a family bovine farm and butcher who are very passionate about beef, so when we can't source our own from the Estate, we buy our beef from them.

We try to meet up with our supplier teams at least a couple of times a year to try new produce and see what they have happening.

Our menu is changing all the time anyway and we will always try and use the Estate produce as much as possible. Where we can't, we fill in the gaps with artisanal suppliers and responsible sourcing is something that the whole Estate is committed to.

> "Everything is pretty much right on our doorstep"

PARTNER CONTENT

Garofalo



SPRING CLEAN YOUR ITALIAN SELECTION

It's time to give your range of Italian goods a refresh

Italian cuisine is loved across households throughout the UK, with the vast majority of households considering a simple pasta dish a weeknight staple.

High quality sauces and pestos, not to mention world-famous Italian cheeses such as Parmiggiano Reggiano, are family favourites – and top-sellers – on these shores with good reason, providing ample flavour alongside convenience and long shelf lives, but it's worth experimenting beyond the tried and tested products to inspire your customers to try something new.

This doesn't have to be scary – or expensive. Jars of antipasti, think sunblushed tomatoes and artichoke hearts as well as nocellara and expertly brined black olives, could well rev up your customer base to level-up a cheese and/or charcuterie board or whizz up a sauce for pastas or risottos.

For those struggling for time, a range of mouth watering ready-to-cook meal solutions are a boon and can help elevate a speedy family meal. For example, truffle and pistachio pesto will enhance family-favourite (basil) pesto pasta into something all adults will be excited to eat, especially when topped with crisped-up charcuterie.

Penne and spaghetti are the most likely pasta shapes to be in British cupboards at any given time, so it makes sense to stock them – an elevated version using traditional techniques, at least – but it's worth branching out into lesser-known shapes to intrigue your customers and make what could be a basic 20-minute dish into something special. Some work best with chunky meat and vegetable sauces, some with smooth tomato or cream ones, and others still can be used to add bolster to soups and broths.

Burrata may be a little diva-ish when it comes to shelf life, but with its popularity across social media and restaurant menus – it's ubiquitous these days, especially during the warmer months – it is worth stocking in addition to Mozzarella and offers those who haven't tried it an indulgent alternative to the more staple cheese.

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