SF SPECIALITY FOOD

CONNECTING THE FINE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY

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EDITOR'S LETTER



IN MODERN HUSTLE CULTURE IT CAN BE EASY TO FALL INTO A COMPETITIVE TRAP, BUT THROUGH COLLABORATION WE CAN STAY CALM AND SUCCEED

I don't think it's just me who feels that the food and drink industry – not to mention the wider world – is a bit, let's say, unsteady on its feet at the moment.

Every day it seems as though there are new challenges to be faced, increasingly large workloads to be completed, and new competition to face down – all of which ideally would have been completed yesterday (not to mention the bigger, sometimes quite scary, stuff that we all face as a nation and workforce.

Without meaning to come across as being negative, and certainly not as goading, but the reality is that the nature of modern business is often to pit us against one another; to succeed someone else needs to fail.

It's standard to not just rate ourselves on the details of our own operations but to literally rank ourselves together with our competitors to find out who is 'winning' at that moment in time, and I feel that is unhealthy.

It is also very much not the most proactive way to work and progress. Yes, we need to stand out from the crowd in order to be seen and successful, but we should do this by celebrating our unique selling points rather than negatively impeding on our 'competition'.

All too often I have seen Instagram be the host for professional put-downs, some of which are just plain nasty. Honesty is often the best policy, but not if it turns bitter as that leaves an unpleasant taste in everybody's mouth.

There seems to be a trend for people or businesses being 'outed', but that's just not my bag and I doubt it is anyone else's.

Instead, why not communicate properly – or even better, collaborate?

Collaborations can inspire some of the greatest products and content; two heads are better than one, after all.

If there's a business, local or otherwise, who you're a fan of or think could be stronger at a certain aspect of what they do – and you're in a position to support – reach out, start a conversation and see where it takes you.

If you're looking for inspiration, the world of craft beer is just brilliant at this. From brewers collaborating with each other to brands collaborating with excellent artists to create knock-out packaging, they've got it nailed.

Or look at the affinage experiment that took place a little while ago, where cheeses were swapped to be aged in another makers' environs – to outstanding effect.

Time and again we see that collaboration often reaps rich rewards, so here's to working for – not against – each other.

> *Time and again we see that collaboration often reaps rich rewards, so here's to working for – not against – each other*

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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What do we want from the next PM?

At the time of writing, the premiership of the UK is yet again a picture of instability. Keir Starmer is out of Number 10 and Andy Burnham is a shoe-in for his replacement... But after years of challenges under multiple Prime Ministers, from business rates (ironically) putting businesses out of action and prices going inevitably up, up and yet further up, what does the food industry want to see from our new leader?

We spoke to three spokespeople from across the food and drink industry to find out what they hope for from our latest Prime Minister.



KAREN DEAR
CEO OF THE CRAFT BAKERS ASSOCIATION (CBA)

My wish for the new Prime Minister is simple: meaningful consultation with small businesses before introducing legislation that affects them.

A family run bakery employing 10 or 20 people operates very differently from a national business employing thousands. Yet all too often, the same legislation is expected to work for both.

I would like to extend an open invitation to the Prime Minister to spend a morning in an independent bakery. There is no substitute for seeing first hand the realities of the industry, the skilled craftsmanship, rising costs and the constant challenge of remaining profitable while serving local communities. There is a world of difference between reading a policy paper in Westminster and watching a family business work tirelessly to keep its doors open.

Independent bakeries are resilient, innovative and deeply rooted in their communities. They create skilled jobs, support local supply chains and contribute enormously to our high streets. They are not asking for special treatment. They are asking for legislation that is practical, proportionate and developed with a genuine understanding of how small businesses operate.

If Government wants thriving high streets and a growing economy, it must stop designing policy for small businesses and start designing it with them.

"Government must understand small businesses before making big decisions"



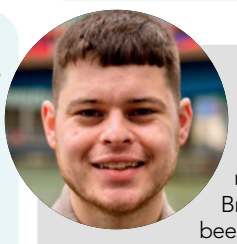
STEVE PEREZ
FOUNDER AND CEO OF GLOBAL BRANDS

A thriving hospitality industry is essential to keeping unemployment low. But over recent years, this sector has been hit exceptionally hard by policy instability from previous Governments. And when hospitality struggles, it isn't just businesses that suffer, it is people's livelihoods, local communities, and the wider labour market. The next Prime Minister has an opportunity to put hospitality back at the heart of the UK's growth agenda. Three changes, in particular, would make a meaningful difference:

If there is one policy that could transform the outlook for hospitality, it is reducing VAT from the current 20% rate to something closer to the 10-13% commonly seen across much of Europe.

A lower VAT rate would stimulate investment, improve affordability for consumers and give hospitality businesses the confidence to grow, recruit and invest.

"We have an opportunity to put hospitality back at the heart of the UK's growth agenda"



JAYDON MANDERS
LUMBERJAXE FOOD COMPANY

Me and my brother Brendon have been lucky enough to secure investment on Dragons' Den, but navigating this industry as a startup is hard work.

If the new Prime Minister actually wants to back challenger food brands like us, they need to sort a few things out, fast. Smaller businesses are getting completely bogged down by complex regulations. We haven't got massive legal teams; it's literally just us on the ground. The government needs to simplify compliance so we can focus on what we do best – cooking up good times and making great products.

Secondly, they have to fix the supply chain. The cost of everything – from ingredients to logistics – has gone through the roof, hitting independent producers and retailers the hardest. We need Andy Burnham to back local supply chains and tackle rocketing manufacturing costs so challenger brands can actually afford to scale up. Finally, they need to open up grassroots funding. Getting early-stage finance from banks is a proper nightmare right now. We had a massive platform on TV, but most entrepreneurs don't get that chance.

The government needs to expand local enterprise funding and support the grafters right at the bottom, because the small startup businesses of today are the ones who are going to create the jobs tomorrow. When working people have more money in their pockets, they spend it at small businesses, fuelling economic growth which benefits everyone.

"The government needs to simplify compliance so we can focus on what we do best"








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JENNY O'NEILL Head of Awards - jenny.oneill@artichokehq.com

The Feed.

Insider intel from the world of fine food

The Storytelling Moat



OLIVER LLOYD
CONSULTANT

I love feeling connected to the food that I eat and being able to talk about the people behind the brands. Even if supermarkets put pictures of their farmers on their packs, it does feel really different to being able to say "oh I picked this up from this great stall at my farmers market and they are so lovely". In my world, I am lucky enough to meet my fair share of founders. I recently met the team behind both Warrendale Wagyu, the Yorkshire family farming business that has, since 2017, built a network of more than 750 British farmers rearing wagyu cattle, and Girl Gone Wild, Mel Phipps's Yorkshire start-up turning wild venison into Great Taste award-winning ready meals. Both brands have great products but they also have great stories.

Why does it matter?
The question one has to ask is am I just an outlier in valuing this stuff or does it matter to others. I recently commissioned some research with The Staff Canteen with 122 chefs and operators across the UK and it's clear I am not alone. Nearly eight in 10 agreed that diners value transparency and storytelling around ingredients. Asked which provenance claim matters most to their customers, "local" came first by a distance: 65% ranked it top, ahead of high animal welfare (32%) and lower carbon footprint (30%). Strikingly, it is chefs outside London (67%) who say local provenance is the claim that matters most to their diners. And it pays: 71% said they could charge more for verified provenance, with more than a third adding 6% or more to the bill.

Big brands can't tell stories with the authenticity of a local grower — and independents should be milking it for all it's worth

This insight should matter to the specialty food scene as this is a story they can tell really well. Put your egg producer's name on the shelf talker, not just "local eggs": the farm, the family, the breed. Give the start-up baker delivering your sourdough a counter card and the occasional Saturday tasting. Brief your team so that every one of them can say "I've met the maker" and mean it. A supermarket can print "farm fresh" on a label; it cannot put a real name, a real face and a true story next to the price.

Make the most of the opportunity
Coming back to Girl Gone Wild, they believe we should all be eating more venison because it is both delicious and sustainable. Their ready meal format makes it accessible to those who are fearful of cooking a protein they don't know how to handle. Citizens of Soil are curating a regular stream of unique olive oils that champion small-scale growers and help take the guesswork out of what is good. So often I walk around a farm shop and feel like the storytelling is lacking. Big brands can't tell stories with the authenticity of a local grower – and independents should be milking it for all it's worth.

Food leaders write to incoming PM

Multiple leaders from within the food and drink industry have penned a letter to the new Prime Minister with a five-point plan to creating an affordable and resilient food system.

The letter highlights that the food and drink industry is Britain's largest manufacturing sector and is worth over £153 billion, supporting over four million jobs – one in nine jobs in the UK, and shows how a more resilient food system would add further value by protecting British households from future food shocks.

Tom Bradshaw, NFU President, said, "British farmers and growers are the foundation of our food system. With 70 million people reliant on us to produce their food, we must act now to secure a resilient, affordable food system in the coming years.

"To drive success, farmers and growers need to know they'll have the workforce they rely on, regulation which supports efficiency and growth, and a planning system that drives investment in much-needed farm infrastructure such as poultry sheds, storage for valuable manures and reservoirs.

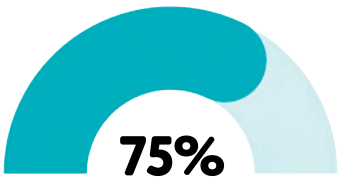
"These are all things that will build resilience in food production, and these investments will help both hard-pressed farmers and struggling consumers. I urge the incoming Prime Minister and their team to get behind this plan and lead the charge."

Andrew Opie, director of food and sustainability at the BRC, said, "Food retailers are proud to support British agriculture and already source the vast majority of their food from the UK. In order to grow this investment, government must work to remove some of the hurdles which hold back British farmers, including on costs, planning restrictions, and reducing friction in EU realignment. This would allow the UK to build a more resilient and affordable food system that can deliver for both consumers and the economy long into the future."

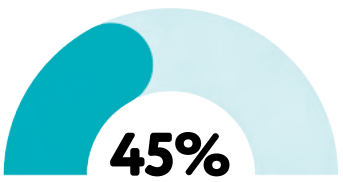
Karen Betts, chief executive, The Food and Drink Federation, said, "Food and drink is the largest manufacturing sector in the UK, contributing £42 billion to the economy and employing more than half a million people in great jobs over long careers. Our industry should be driving growth and creating new jobs in every postcode across the country. But instead, many businesses are struggling with the cost of rising bills and complex regulation.

"We want government to work with our sector to incentivise investment, particularly in new technologies, advanced skills, and the R&D necessary to make our food system more resilient and our diets healthier. Too often food and drink has been overlooked by government and our industry's work to ensure households everywhere have access

Businesses and retailers slow to adopt AI



75% of consumer packaged goods (CPG) respondents remain in pilot mode or exploration mode, while only 18% are scaling impact.



Retailers represent a two-speed world in which 45% are scaling impact but another 40% have barely begun.

AI in CPG and Retail: How Winners Are Pulling Ahead, Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF)



Litter-cutting pilot leads to behaviour change

A recent litter-reduction pilot headed up by Keep Britain Tidy and supported by KFC, Mars Wrigley, McDonald's and Nestlé has cut litter by 16% - demonstrating that sustained behaviour change activity can deliver cleaner streets, stronger community pride and renewed economic confidence.

The 12-month 'Love Where You Live' programme was located in West Yorkshire's Heckmondwike and combined evidence-led messaging, strategic placement of litter interventions, community engagement and collaboration with local businesses and schools.

It highlights the critical role that shaping consumer behaviour can have in addressing environmental challenges, beyond packaging design and recycling infrastructure.

The findings also show a link between perception of an area's cleanliness and the habits of its inhabitants, and underscores the commercial relevance of tackling litter with 16% of businesses in the area saying customers would spend more in cleaner areas and 30% believing that improved cleanliness would attract new businesses.



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DRS support package confirmed

Ahead of the October 2027 DRS launch in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Exchange for Change has shared details of a targeted support package.

The support includes:

- The regulations allow for retailers in urban areas with a retail footprint of less than 100m² to be automatically exempted from operating a return point for DRS items.
- An extension of the exemption criteria, allowing for retailers with a sales area of between 100m² and 199m² in urban settings and rural retailers with less than 200m² of sales area to apply for a size-based exemption.
- Further exemption allowances have also been agreed on the basis of proximity, heritage or listed building restrictions, site access or lack of access to utilities.
- £60m in grant funding available to help up to 10,000 small, independent retailers meet the cost of installing Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) across England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
- Grants of £6,000 will be made available per site to qualifying small, independent retailers in three annual payments of £2,000, which will be funded three months after the installation of an RVM.

Price is key to confectionery shoppers



The Future of Confectionery Activation, Vypr and Shop! ANZ

Power of social media highlighted in retail research

Recent research conducted by American Express has found that almost two-thirds of UK adults have visited a retail site after being influenced by content seen on social media – and that this benefits surrounding retailers, too.

The research suggests the rise of the 'viral pilgrimage', whereby shoppers – over one-third of Gen Z – will travel to another city or region to purchase a product popular on social media, and that 87% of consumers have spent money during a social media-influenced trip to a retailer – rising to 94% among Gen Z.

Dan Edelman, UK general manager, merchant services at American Express, said, "Social media has become the new shop window for Britain's high streets. What starts as a scroll on social is increasingly translating into real-world visits, increased spending and growth opportunity for businesses across the UK.

"What's striking is that the impact doesn't stop at the venue that first caught a consumer's attention – social media is creating a domino effect that benefits neighbouring businesses and helps entire high streets thrive. For merchants, particularly those looking to attract younger consumers, the ability to turn online hype into memorable in-person experiences has never been more important. At American Express, we're committed to championing the UK's high streets and the businesses that power them, helping merchants make the most of these changing consumer behaviours."

We're selling time well spent



EMILY MOSS
THETFORD GARDEN CENTRE

There's been a fundamental shift in what people want from bricks-and-mortar retail, and garden centres have quietly become one of the most compelling answers to that challenge. We're no longer simply selling plants; we're selling time well spent. That's been Thetford Garden Centre's journey since 1982, evolving from a traditional garden centre into something far more layered.

What's driven that change is a deep understanding that retail can't survive on transaction alone. People expect a lot more from garden centres now, something that feels like a day out. That's where we've leaned in. We've built a destination that encourages emotional connection. Our restaurant, the Lime Kiln Kitchen offers a reason to pause and spend time with loved ones, the introduction of the Norfolk Pizza Co trailer adds something informal and sociable, and the yurt creates a flexible, almost magical space for events and gatherings. These aren't just additions, they have opened more opportunities for us to connect to our customers, and they are integral to how we've reimagined the business.

Instinctive evolution

Being independent and family-run has also been vital in this evolution. It allows us to move instinctively, to respond to what our community actually wants rather than chasing trends for the sake of it. Our involvement in local projects isn't a marketing exercise; it's about embedding ourselves into the fabric of the area. When people feel that emotional connection, they don't just shop with you; they champion you.

Being independent and family-run has been vital in our evolution. It allows us to move instinctively, to respond to what our community actually wants rather than

Fresh discoveries

Keeping the experience fresh is absolutely critical if you want to remain a true destination rather than a one-off visit. Seasonality plays a huge role. Retailers often underestimate just how powerful the calendar can be if it's done properly. We lean into the natural rhythm of the year, spring planting, summer entertaining, autumn comfort, Christmas gifting and reflect that not just in plants, but in food, displays, and the overall atmosphere. It means that even if a customer visits regularly, the experience never feels static; there's always something new to discover.

Destination retail, at its heart, is about generosity. Generosity of space and of experience. Get that right, and the products take care of themselves. We've simply evolved with our customers, creating somewhere that reflects how people want to live now, they want to live slower, more connected, and with a little bit of everyday indulgence along the way.



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The Feed. Dairy



Heatwave hits UK milk supplies

The recent heatwaves have had a pronounced impact on the British dairy industry, as well as those across Europe, according to recent insights from AHDB.

British milk supplies are currently stated to be down by 18.5 million litres, in large part due to the heat stress dairy cows are experiencing in the extreme temperatures.

In a recent post on the AHDB website, Susie Stannard, lead analyst (dairy) advised that the effects have been temporarily "pronounced, tipping Europe and the UK from an over-supply to an undersupply".

Spot milk has risen to 38-48ppl, according to data from milkprices.com, above Defra's average farmgate milk price of 34.2ppl, which Susie says "suggests some anxiety amongst processors about milk availability, at least in the short term."

Bulk cream numbers are also up on the £1.37 reported by AHDB at the end of June – it has firmed towards £1.60 ex-works with reports stating values as high as £1.68, says Susie.

"Climate change means that severe heat events are likely to become a more common feature of British summers and will become an increasingly important dynamic facing the industry," she continues.

"Farmers should consider taking steps to mitigate the effects of heat stress which may include providing extra shade, housing with fan and misting systems or minimising yard time."

Climate change means that severe heat events are likely to become a more comon feature of British summers and will become an increasingly important dynamic facing the industry

On the Ground

Dairy farmer Charles Goadby, of Manor Farm, Nuneaton, told the BBC's *Farming Today* programme, "Farmers [are] paid on a set price, and we have no say in that. We're price takers, not price makers, so we're just we're losing money. When we're having drops in production, this heat is hitting us in the pocket hard.

"Farmers are very good at adapting to change, it's what we've done for generations. But without the support and without the fairness and the returns to enable us to do that, it's going to be hard.

"We're up for the challenge. We just need the backing from government. We need some more support, not necessarily in terms of handouts, but in terms of fairness within the supply chain.

"Allow farming to be long-term sustainable, allow farmers to make a profit to reinvest, and ensure that we've got a good food supply here in the UK."

A DEFRA spokesperson said, "This government is backing our hard-working dairy farmers with new regulations put in place last year to improve fairness and transparency across the supply chain so that businesses can flourish.

"Most supermarkets have direct supply contracts with farmers to ensure more stable farm incomes and the price paid to them has not fallen in the past year.

"If farmers feel their contracts are not compliant, they should contact the Agricultural Supply Chain Adjudicator."



The future of dairy is exciting

The desire for premium dairy products in 2026 is being driven by the demand for premium products with clean ingredients and clear traceability. Consumers are choosing products that align with their health goals, making a correlation between, wellness and lifestyle. Independent retailers can champion the dairy sector by championing their local and regional dairies. By supporting local they can offer a unique and varied range of dairy products that differentiates themselves from the larger retailer whilst also focusing on freshness, provenance and quality. The future of dairy is exciting, the growth in traditional and quality dairy products that has been seen over the past 12 months is expected to continue. Opening opportunities for innovation to create great quality dairy products.

Henry Cooke, founder of Clotton Creamery, on the outlook for premium dairy

Sector influences in 2026



Dairy has seen falling retail prices in 2026 for some categories. For example, butter, driven by lower wholesale prices.



Higher levels of scratch cooking will likely benefit butter, plain yogurt and cream.



Products linked to UPFs, such as flavoured yogurts, will continue to decline.

AHDB



TOP PRODUCT



Clotton Creamery Cheshire Clotted Cream
Made with using the milk from the creamery's free-range cows to a traditional recipe, this is creamy and indulgent.
clottoncreamery.co.uk

Delamere partners with Swizzels for flavoured milk range

Inspired by some of sweet maker Swizzel's most popular confections, Delamere has tapped into the nostalgia trend with two new flavoured milks.

The Delamere and Swizzels range includes Squashies Drumstick Raspberry & Milk, Squashies Rhubarb & Custard and Lemon Refreshers.

Refreshing and perfect for on-the-go, the new releases have been designed to support retailers to drive impulse sales and offer a contemporary twist on childhood favourites.

Jessica Page, brand manager at Delamere Flavoured Milk, said, "As our first-ever collaboration, the launch of this range with Swizzels is a really exciting milestone. Nostalgia is a huge trend at the moment and by reimagining retro flavours, we're bringing together trusted heritage, playful nostalgia and great tasting flavoured milk in a way which really resonates with today's consumers."



UK flavoured **butter** sales rose by **24%** in the **52** weeks to **7th** September **2025**, compared with the previous **12** months. The same period also saw growth of **16.2%** for **packs** of **flavoured** butter.

Worldpanel



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Retail business confidence rebounds

Two-thirds of retail businesses expect stronger trading in the coming 12 months, according to the Lloyds Business Barometer, while retail business confidence has risen above the UK average of 47% to 53%.

Payment experience is now seen as a driver of performance as opposed to a final step in a transaction, with retailers now linking it to customer flow, staff efficiency, cash flow management and wider business planning.

The survey found that 77% of retailers say integrated reporting and reconciliation are important to daily operations, while 76% highlight access to funds and settlement timing as critical to how they run their businesses. At the same time, 37% identify payments administration as a significant operational burden.



People are hungrier than ever for organic



MARK BRUCE
INFINITY FOODS

Providing healthy, organic food has been at the forefront of what we've been doing at Infinity Foods for over 50 years.

People care more and more about the food they bring to their family dinner table.

Despite everything the last decade has thrown at companies trying to source organic commodities, demand has stayed strong — and recent surveys support our feeling that people are hungrier than ever for organic.

This year saw growth in the UK organic market for an amazing 14th year in a row. That's the real positive story amongst stormy seas, and it's the one we'd rather tell.

It's ten years since Brexit, and our social media feeds are full of opinion pieces on its effect on the UK economy. For us, it's been a challenge. Many companies took an instant hit to overall sales when they woke up on Friday 24th June 2016.

We were no different.
The costs associated with importing goods has spiralled across the industry

At Infinity, we faced the loss of longstanding European suppliers. With EU organic standards being stricter than those elsewhere, replacing a lost supplier isn't quite as easy as some might think; We need to work with people we can really trust, so lots of work was needed.

Customers want more organic, vegetarian and gluten-free options because they actually care about what they're eating — not because it's the latest trend

On top of the shifting political landscape and global instability, climate change has really begun to hit harvests in earnest. With unpredictable weather impacting harvests worldwide.

And yet — the demand for organic grows
The 2026 Soil Association Organic Market Report says that 83% of UK households now buy organic products.

That tells us that we're on the right track. This isn't a fad people picked up and will quietly drop when times are harder and wallets lighter; it's a genuine shift in what people are demanding from their food. Customers want more organic, vegetarian and gluten-free options because they actually care about what they're eating — not because it's the latest trend.

With one in three households saying they actively avoid ultra processed foods, we won't be quietly lowering our standards or turning our backs on the good stuff that got us where we are today.

If demand is holding up this well against 10 years travelling a sometimes rocky road, our organic principles must be worth protecting. We're happy to keeping wokring hard to find the best food out there, so our customers don't have to compromise on what they're putting in their cupboards.



It's time to evolve for GLP-1 shoppers

According to 4C Associates, around 3% of British adults – approximately 1.6 million people – are currently using GLP-1 medications for weight loss, and with the food they choose to purchase being a vital element of their treatment and an attitude of 'fewer but better' shaping their shopping habits, it is important that food retailers learn to cater for this evolving demand.

It has found that GLP-1 users are seeking out nutritionally-rich food with a greater scrutiny on quality and freshness.

UK retail data is starting to see a shift, it says, with grocery sales rising 2.5% in value but 0.2% i volume during the Christmas 2024 trading period and categories which rely on impulse consumption facing pressure.

"GLP-1 adoption remains in its early stages, but the sector is already responding to its behavioural signals," say Katie Deem, director of hospitality, leisure and travel at supply chain consultancy 4C Associates, and consultant Felix Haston. "Analysts warn the trend could represent a structural shift in demand rather than a temporary diet cycle. If appetite suppression becomes more widespread, the implications for consumption patterns, category performance and commercial economics could be significant."



UK food loses ground in global markets

"Food and drink businesses are part of the fabric of every community in the UK, and it's concerning to see them struggling to compete overseas. The UK produces world-class food and drink, drawing on our heritage and our reputation for innovation, but we have to be able to remain competitive overseas against local products. The costs of producing food and drink in the UK are higher than in many competitor economies, from energy to employment, and constantly changing regulation only adds to these. There is plenty government can do to improve the competitiveness of our food and drink exporters, many of which are SMEs, from helping companies to access the benefits of trade deals to lowering the cost of doing business in the UK."

Karen Betts, chief executive, The Food and Drink Federation (FDF) on the struggles of small to medium size enterprises aiming to build overseas opportunities.



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The Feed. Fresh



Language reboot needed

According to a recent report from the EIT Food Consumer Observatory, while consumers care about how their food is produced the language that is currently used is unlikely to influence their food choices unless they clearly link to personal benefits.

Terms such as 'resilient' and 'regenerative' are frequently used in the food and farming industries, but communication can be strengthened by linking farming practices with benefits including better flavour, perceived healthiness, visible links to farmers, trusted certification and fewer chemical inputs, says the report, *Making Agriculture Matter: Toward consumer-centric positioning of resilient and regenerative agriculture*.

Resilient agriculture is important to UK consumers, according to the report, but farming systems' ability to adapt to climate change or economic shocks while maintaining food supply is not likely to guide their personal food choices when shopping – they see it as the responsibility of the wider food system, not theirs at the checkout.

Consumers are looking for traditional values combined with modern technology, and in the study, the narrative 'food that actually nourishes' connected the food they were buying with healthier soil, stronger flavour and fewer synthetic inputs.

Klaus G. Grunert, professor of marketing at Aarhus University and lead of the EIT Food Consumer Observatory, said, "When we translate those practices into things people can taste, trust and verify, such as better flavour, fewer chemicals, a farmer they can picture, or an independent label they recognise. The interest is there.

"The opportunity for the sector is to lead with the benefit, not the technique."

TOP PRODUCT



Mattarello Fresh Egg Rigatoni
Made using premium durum wheat semolina and a high percentage of fresh free-range eggs.
cotswold-fayre.co.uk



Real Olive Company Organic Kalamata Olives
Succulent whole olives with a unique, deep aubergine colour and almond shape.
therealolivecompany.co.uk

'Fresh-first' approach promoting food waste

A recent report published by Nomad Foods has found that up to £539 per year is being wasted by households discarding fresh vegetables – and that over half of European households discard fresh vegetables every month.

The data comes from a study of over 10,750 adults across the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Croatia.

Many respondents believed that fresh produce including meat and fish was always higher in nutrition than its frozen counterparts.

Frozen food is one solution, and Speciality Food readers can also help their customers avoid fresh food waste by promoting a 'less but better' mindset and meal planning, as well as sharing recipes via in-store cards and via social media, newsletters and websites which inspire shoppers to minimise their food wastage.



The UK's **seafood** market has been buoyed by **consumer** demand from both **domestic** and **international** markets as well as **diversification** to reach a value of **£6.09 billion** – a **YOY** increase of **4.5%**

Seafish

New Covent Garden Market achieves £1b turnover for first time

The turnover for New Covent Market has hit a new milestone amidst a £150 million regeneration project.

According to the Covent Garden Market Authority (NCMA), the turnover for the iconic London market has surpassed £1 billion for the first time.

Combined turnover of the 130 businesses who trade at the market reached £1.079bn in the 2025-26 financial year, up 15.5% from £934m in 2024-25, showing significant growth.

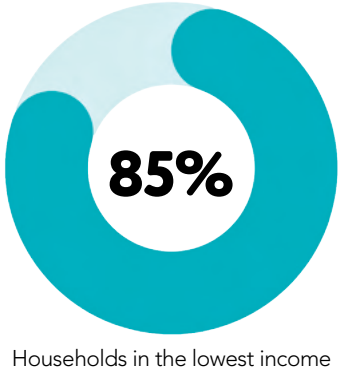
The rise is due to recalibration of rent calibration and the operations of the 130 businesses which trade at the market.

New Covent Garden Market is the UK's largest wholesale fruit, vegetable, and flower market, and supplies over 40% of London's restaurants, hotels, and caterers.

Wanda Goldwag, chair of CGMA, said, "Reaching over £1 billion in turnover is a testament to the strength and reach of New Covent Garden Market and the people who make it what it is."



Households struggling to afford healthy diets



Households in the lowest income fifth of the population would need to spend 85% on food to afford the government-recommended healthy diet



Fruit and vegetables only account for 3% of traditional advertising food and non-alcoholic drink expenditure, compared to at least 29% for unhealthy foods

Broken Plate Report 2026, Food Foundation

Heat waves are projected to **add** around **11%** to the **price** of the UK's top **20** fruit and vegetables b**y 2035** and around **68%** by **2050** under a high **emissions** scenario, on top of normal **inflation**. Imported **tropical** fruit such as melons, oranges, bananas, easy peelers and grapes will rise 1**2%** to 1**4%** by **2035** and **80%** to **93%** by **2050** on these **climate** grounds alone.

The Price of 5 a Day?, The Autonomy Institute

Why smart operators are focusing on value,not just cost



MARK RODGERS
ROBERTS OF PORT DINORWIC

Foodservice operators and fine food retailers with catering offers are facing one of the toughest trading environments in recent memory. Rising labour costs, energy prices and ingredient inflation continue to squeeze margins, while customers still expect exceptional quality and value. Simply increasing prices is no longer a sustainable strategy.

The businesses that will thrive are those taking a broader view of value by reducing waste, improving yield and delivering menu flexibility without compromising on quality.

Food waste remains one of the biggest opportunities to improve profitability. Every gram lost through inconsistent portioning, over-production or inefficient preparation directly impacts the bottom line. At the same time, labour shortages mean operators increasingly need products that reduce preparation time, improve consistency and help kitchen teams do more with fewer people.

Health is no longer a niche consideration; it's firmly mainstream. Diners want meals that work harder for them, with higher protein, more fibre and ingredients that support healthier lifestyles without sacrificing flavour.

Global cuisines also continue to shape purchasing decisions. Consumers are seeking authentic world flavours, bold spices and street food-inspired dishes while still expecting convenience and consistency. Operators who can respond quickly to these trends will be well placed to drive repeat business.

High-protein, fibre-rich meals inspired by global cuisines offer consumers exactly what they're looking for while giving operators

The biggest opportunity lies in bringing these demands together. High-protein, fibre-rich meals inspired by global cuisines offer consumers exactly what they're looking for while giving operators dishes that command premium pricing and strong customer appeal.

Innovation doesn't always mean reinventing the wheel. More often, it's about taking trusted ingredients and applying them in new ways to create products that are versatile, simple to prepare and suit multiple occasions.

Businesses that invest in efficiency, work collaboratively with trusted supply partners and stay closely aligned to changing consumer tastes will emerge stronger. In today's market, success isn't about being the cheapest; it's about delivering consistent quality, minimising waste and creating food experiences that customers genuinely value.

The **demand** for indulgent **cold** beverages is **booming**, with **74%** of **Gen Z** preferring **iced** coffee and **68%** viewing specialty serves as **"desserts or treats"**

Galbani





Heatwave 2026: Impact on foodservice

- Outdoor, riverside and park-adjacent venues consistently outperformed indoor venues, delivering a median week-on-week sales increase of +2.8%, compared to a median decline of -0.6% for indoor venues.
- Only one of the five heatwave periods analysed produced a clear and broadly positive uplift for hospitality businesses, with July and August 2025 heatwaves actually resulting in median week-on-week sales declines of -4.0% and -3.3% respectively.
- Heatwaves shift where consumers spend rather than guaranteeing overall sector growth, concentrating demand in outdoor and casual formats while many indoor venues struggle to benefit.

Staying in impacts foodservice market

According to the latest insights from Lumina Intelligence's UK *Eating Out Market Report* 2026, Britain's eating out market is being impacted by at-home dining, delivery and convenience.

The sector's 1.8% growth – taking its value to £102.8bn in 2026 – is being driven by how consumers eat as opposed to how often they eat out, the report advises.

The research shows that 62% of British consumers are now opting to stay at home and creating an 'eating out' experience in comfort and control, often using delivery services which are rising in consumption year-on-year.

New formats such as food-to-go, drive-thrus and delivery kitchens are allowing businesses to capture demand both in and out of home.

Andy Crossan, Head of Insight at Lumina Intelligence, said, "The definition of eating out is changing. Growth is about capturing occasions wherever they happen. Operators that can combine delivery, digital and flexible formats will be best placed to succeed in this evolving market."



Out-of-home opportunity led by value and experience

IGD has forecast that the out of home market will grow from £103.3bn in 2026 to £122.8bn by 2031, with around 85% of total value growth being attributed to inflation.

Nicola Knight, head of away from home insight at IGD, said: "While pressures will continue over the next few years, the horizon shows promise, and businesses can emerge strongly if they focus investments on value, experiences, and operational efficiency in the meantime.

"As consumers become more selective, the best way for businesses to outperform the market is by understanding which occasions their customers are still prepared to prioritise and building propositions around them."



The Latest.

Stay up to date with our feed of the latest food & drink product news

Hojicha Powder joins Clearspring range

Crafted from roasted organically farmed green tea leaves which are harvested and roasted in Japan, Hojicha Powder offers a smooth and mellow taste with lower levels of caffeine than conventional green tea. The powder sits alongside Clearspring loose leaf and teabag Hojicha formats, and transforms the tea into a comforting drink with a gentle smoky flavour and earthy notes of caramel and cocoa.

clearspring.co.uk





New fruit cider cans released

Independent cider producer Gravity Theory has launched two new fruit flavours in 330ml and 440ml cans – catering to the growing demand for quality ciders. The two flavours – Berry Cherry, which includes raspberries and blackberries, and Hazy Pineapple, which is tropical and naturally sweet – both include real fruit and are delicately sweet, likely sparkling ciders that are strong in flavour and aroma. They are lower in alcohol than Gravity Theory's original apple cider, at 3.4% ABV rather than 4.5%.

gravitytheorycider.com

Benefit Juice relaunches range

The range of health-rich drinks has undergone a revamp across its branding and flavours, and each carton has been boosted with the addition of fibre and vitamin D. The range consists of three juices – Cleanse, Enrich and Vitality – each of which contains essential vitamins to support overall health, boost energy and strengthen the immune system. Cleanse offers the goodness of prunes; Enrich is a blend of Carrot, Mango & Ginger; and Vitality combines beetroot, raspberry and grape. "We are excited to be relaunching our core range of pure juices," explains Gavin Cox, founder. "Our philosophy is simple: eating well needn't be hard work. We take the finest quality fruit and vegetables, juice them and pack them with nutrients. They are a simple way for health-conscious individuals to get their daily intake."

thebenefitbrand.com





New hot sauces from Rubies in the Rubble

Food waste fighters Rubies in the Rubble have launched three new hot sauces to sit alongside their ketchup, mayonnaise and mustard range: Hot Honey Sauce, Habanero Hot Sauce and Jalapeno Hot Sauce. Full of goodness from saved pears, carrots and fermented hot peppers, the range offers varying levels of heat to add spice to meals throughout the day. Jenny Costa, founder, said, "Rubies has you covered for classic table sauces, now we're taking things up a gear with tangy, fiery hot sauces and sweet, spicy hot honey; each bottle rescues produce that was destined to be wasted and adds a flavour punch to elevate your everyday dishes."

rubiesintherubble.com

Festive gift packs from Tracklements

Tracklements has created three new gift packs to help shoppers celebrate condiments this Christmas. 12 Trimmings of Tracklements, Jolliest Festive Favourites and Cheese Lover's Collection are all full of award-winning chutneys, relishes and sauces designed to elevate meals and snacks throughout the festive period. 12 Trimmings of Tracklements features Tomato & Chilli Chutney, Mustard Ketchup, Quintessential Brown Sauce and Robust Wholegrain Mustard alongside eight other jars; Jolliest Festive Favourites includes Christmas Spice Chutney, Cranberry Port & Orange Sauce and Sticky Fig Relish; and Cheese Lover's Collection contains Caramelised Onion Relish, Fresh Chilli Jam, Apricot & Ginger Chutney and Apple & Cider Chutney.

tracklements.co.uk



TRENDING PRODUCTS



OUR EDITOR'S PICKS OF THE HOTTEST PRODUCTS TO HIT THE MARKET RIGHT NOW

QUALITY ICED COFFEE GOES DECAF



Lost Sheep is tapping into the growing demand for decaf coffee with the launch of its new Sugar Cane Decaf Iced Latte with Fibre cans. The release taps into three of this year's hottest trends – decaf, functionality and fibre – and combines speciality-grade decaf coffee which is roasted in small batches to bring out its chocolate notes with skimmed milk and chicory root fibre. Stuart Wilson, founder, said, "With our new Sugar Cane Decaf Iced Latte, we've created a coffee that people won't believe is decaf."

lostsheepcoffee.com

NEXT-GEN FLAVOURED OILS

GOOD PHATS has released a four-strong range of finishing oils in squeezy bottles. Available in Chilli, Lemon, Garlic and Basil variants, they are made by co-pressing fresh ingredients with olives during the pressing process to create an intense flavour profile. Each oil includes tasting notes and serving suggestions.

goodphats.com



FRUITY WATER KEFIR HITS CHILLERS



Windmill Organics has launched two new organic water kefirs under its Raw Vibrant Living brand. Made with live cultures and naturally low in sugar, the two new organic water kefirs – in Mango & Passionfruit and Cherry flavours – offer a soft drink alternative that supports gut health. Gemma Williams, head of marketing, said, "Our water kefirs give retailers the opportunity to tap into one of the fastest growing trends with an organic, refreshing alternative that brings something different to the fixture."

rawvibrantliving.co.uk





Rocks cordials back on shelves

Popular Rocks cordials are back in the UK market via SHS Drinks, who have revived the brand for 2026's shopper. There are four flavours in the range – Juicy Oranges, Fruity Blackcurrant, Zesty Lemons and Tasty Summer Fruits – each of which contains whole fruit and minimal, natural additional ingredients. Three formats house the new drinks: Organic Squash, Squash and Sparkling Cans.

rocksdrinks.co.uk

Alfresco dining inspired dressings launched by Charlie & Ivy's

The North Yorkshire-located business, based on an award-winning rapeseed oil farm, has released three new rapeseed oil-based dressings to coincide with the seasonal rise of outdoor dining. The three new seasonal flavours are Fennel Seed vinaigrette style dressing with notes of fennel, mustard, lemon and honey; Mint & Balsamic dressing with notes of mint, balsamic and honey and Lemon & Caper dressing with notes of lemon, capers, honey and Dijon mustard.

charlieandivys.co.uk



Spice Kitchen partners with Chetna Makan for spice selection

Spice Kitchen has partnered with food writer Chetna Makan to create a limited-edition Indian spice kit inspired by her latest cookbook, *Chetna's 5 Ingredient Indian*. The collection includes Chetna's Chaat Masala, Sabji Masala, Garam Masala and Tandoori Masala, all presented in a keepsake tin. Chetna Makan said, "Working with Spice Kitchen to create these blends means people can spend less time measuring and more time enjoying the cooking itself."

spicekitchenuk.com



Convenient seafood from 555 Amanda



555 Amanda has launched two ambient 200g pots of seafood in response to the consumer appetite for convenient, protein-rich meal and snacking options. The new Mussels in Brine provides naturally sweet and tender mussels in a versatile brine which work well in salads, pasta and seafood platters. The Smoked Mussels are gently smoked on beechwood before being preserved in rapeseed oil for a rich, savoury taste profile. Gavin McLean, UK general manager at 555 Amanda, said, "Consumers are becoming more adventurous in their food choices and are looking for products that combine convenience, nutrition and premium quality. Our new ambient mussel range gives retailers an opportunity to introduce shoppers to a category that remains relatively untapped in the UK, while offering all the practical benefits of a long shelf life and ambient storage."

555amanda.co.uk

Let's Get Fired Up



CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS
GREAT BRITISH FOOD AWARDS

Are you prepared for barbecue season? We're right in the swing of high summer folks, and that means grills up and down the country are being fired up – and with inspiration aplenty across social media and beyond, shoppers are hungry for new.

What are consumers on the hunt for in fine food retail when it comes to outdoor cooking? Well, there's certainly been an uptick in them being more concerned about the quality and cuts of meat their choosing (ethically reared, and with a sway towards American-style sharing steaks and chunkier ribs). And they're searching for more sustainable charcoal too – British, FCA and/or ECHA certified.

As you'll know, they're always asking for 'something new' too, which is where the Great British Food Awards can lend a helping hand. Head to the website where you can download a digital copy of the 2025 winners' publication, or search in the winners' tab by category to discover thousands of products across more than 60 categories to excite your customers.

Today's fine food retail customers are looking for more when it comes to barbecues products that can become talking points

There's Yew Tree Farm's Heritage Meats, whose Herdwick hogget and mutton and Belted Galloway beef are loved by Michelin Starred chefs for being smoked and cooked low and slow.

Gold-winning Firefly BBQ's Oak Smoked Greek Pyramid Salt brings a warmth and moreishness to grilled meats, fish, vegetables and desserts.

And Blackfire Food's Ghost Pepper & Black Lime Ketchup is all at once deeply savoury and complex, with tomato sweetness, smoky pepper heat, and citrus from sun-dried black limes – wonderful with sausages and steak.

We're firmly in the season of the spritz too and if you're trying to, again, make more sustainable choices for your shoppers, take a look at GBF Award-winning Apperofi from Grounds for Good. Distilled five times in the cellar of a historic Welsh castle, and in a unique, lightweight paper bottle, it's a British take on Aperol, blending sweet and bitter orange with rhubarb, gentian and rosemary, coming in at only 11%.

Discover even more delicious possibilities at greatbritishfoodawards.com

COTSWOLD FAYRE

Introducing The Deli Edit

Discover the first edition of The Deli Edit! Explore our curated collection of premium products from our Ambient Catalogue, carefully handpicked to complement and enhance your fresh deli offering.

This outstanding range brings together exceptional brands to help you inspire shoppers, increase basket spend and keep customers coming back for more.

Scan the QR code to shop the range!



Christmas 2026

At Cotswold Fayre, our search for exceptional festive food and drink never stands still, and this year's Christmas Catalogue is no exception.

To have the best chance of securing your Christmas range, place your pre-orders by *Friday 31st July*!



Scan the QR code to place your Christmas order.

www.cotswold-fayre.co.uk | 03452606060 | marketing@cotswold-fayre.co.uk







Britain's Best Delis:
De Beauvoir Deli, London

A Hackney institution and of key importance to its community, this deli is a model of sustainable growth

One signature of a great business is that its growth has, or at least comes across as having, come about very organically – even casually. Rather than striving for the next opportunity and pulling out all the stops (and hours in the day) to make it work, these businesses seem almost effortless in the evolving service they provide to their appreciative customers. London's De Beavoir Deli is one such business.

Founded in the De Beauvoir area of the London neighbourhood of Hackney in 2009, it has moved with the times to provide a resource for its community that now nobody in the area could be without. Simple provisions such as bread (from one of the city's most iconic bakeries, Dusty Knuckle) and coffee (from Monmouth Coffee Company) are levelled up to everyday items that feel extra special, and its format – gradually grown and shaped as demand has changed and increased – now caters to both retail and foodservice customers in a deliciously satisfying way.

"When we first opened there was a very small team of just three people, including me, and we were purely a retail operation apart from making some sandwiches to order from the deli counter, which were made in our miniscule kitchen," begins Harry Davies, owner, who grew up in the area and is still a resident today. Now proudly self-proclaimed as an 'artisan deli, café and kitchen' it is clear that the business's evolution has been pronounced.

Organic growth

"Something I'm very proud of is that in our 17 years of business there has never been any external investment; all growth has been very organic and self-generated," says Harry. "A lot of it is down to my inability to just stand still, and I'm naturally drawn to new projects – I find it satisfying and love doing it.

"We're now based out of three buildings on the same road, including a production kitchen which services our other two kitchens, in our deli and café. A little van trundles down the road twice a day, and the production kitchen also offers catering services." The menu has the same simple elegance as the rest of the site: sandwich platters, large salads and quiches made using premium ingredients.

Pre-Covid the deli's foodservice offering consisted of takeaway coffees, sandwiches, soup and quiches, and 12 seats were available to waiting customers, but the pandemic inspired the addition of a service hatch for coffees, "for social distancing reasons", and this led to the shop being "spun around". The latest iteration of De Beauvoir Deli's foodservice offering includes a 15-strong team in the kitchen alone.

> *Something I'm very proud of is that in our 17 years of business there has never been any external investment; all growth has been very organic and self-generated*

The deli has changed too. "We've found because of the way food retail has changed in the past few years, what was considered gourmet maybe 10 years ago is much more commonplace – especially in London. There were products you would only find in high-end delis which are now all over the place, so to differentiate ourselves we expanded what we make in-house – if we can't find something we want to sell, we simply make it ourselves."

A community hub for food lovers

This organic approach has certainly been a hit with the local community, of which the shop is a cornerstone. "We've got a lovely, lovely community around here but it's unrecognisable from the early days, although some of our customers have shopped with us since day one, and some of the people who work here used to come in as small kids."

Being a leafy, suburban neighbourhood, Harry imagined that weekdays would be relatively quiet and weekends rammed, but as time has gone on businesses have set up shop in the area making lunchtimes a booming opportunity for the site. Music industry types and architects aside, he has always been keen to be a foodie hub for all ages. "We've always tried to have a broad appeal, as much to an older lady as a 20-something," he says, with older generations tending to favour the retail side of operations and younger shoppers the foodservice arm.

In an ideal, fine food-led world, every neighbourhood would have a De Beauvoir-style business. Somewhere you could pick up a coffee and bagel to-go before work, pop in for a freshly made sandwich at lunchtime, and revisit to gather supplies including a cream-filled chilled dessert to hunker down with of an evening or weekend. De Beauvoir deli has demonstrated that by getting the foundations solid before building upwards, or sideways, an independent retailer can indeed be (nearly) all things to (nearly) all people, naturally.

TOP PRODUCTS



Dusty Knuckle Potato Sourdough
A deliciously versatile loaf from a London institution.



Croissant
Made on-site at De Beauvoir's in-house bakery.



Fenton Farm Free-range Eggs
Flavourful eggs from the Somerset-Devon border.



Monmouth Espresso Blend Beans
A blend of beans from Guatemala, Brazil and Colombia.



Comte
Sold pre-portioned and wrapped.

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Counterpoint.

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Keeping Your Cool

As impractical heat becomes a regular occurrence, how can cheese counters cope?

Temperatures across the UK have soared this summer, with fridges across both independent and mainstream retail failing and causing issues for the food sector as a whole. Experts are saying that this is set to be commonplace in the future, meaning this is no longer a 'freak' issue to deal with as and when; it's time to put measures into place to cope with the rising heat.

We spoke to three retailers to find out how they are managing this summer, and how they plan to cope in future too.

Finnian's, Bishopsbourne

"In a small shop like mine," says Finn Dunlop of Finnians, "I have low ceilings, a flat roof and four fridges all fighting hard to keep the stock cool with knock on effect of heating the room even more around it. At night this has been particularly challenging, pushing up the ambient temperature without being able to open windows or doors. This not only affects the other ambient stock in the shop but also places ever increasing strain and risk on the actual fridges. Therefore while trying to keep the fresh stock chilled, the fridges come increasingly strained, risking failure and also potentially damaging other stock. With fridges working harder then electricity bills also soar in the summer!

Finn has learned lessons from previous hot periods. "After my first summer last year, I knew there was an increased risk of fridges failing and losing stock as well as the fridges themselves. I have therefore installed an air conditioning unit, at considerable expense, to reduce the burden on the fridges and remove as much of the hot air as possible from the room. This reduces how hard the fridges are working, preserving the condition of the cheeses, as well as improving the ambient temperature in the room. The airflow in the fridges is therefore gentler, preserving the humidity. I also use cloches in the counter, particularly for the soft cheeses. Hopefully the AC is also offsetting some of the cost of the energy from the fridges!"

Friday Street Farm Shop, Suffolk

Friday Street Farm Shop has a dedicated chilled cheese room, but that doesn't mean that it is immune from temperature fluctuations. "I am quite lucky to have a dedicated walk-in cheese room which is designed to create the ideal conditions for cheese, although I still have to do my part," says Dean Holmes, deli and cheese room manager. "It is important to keep a log of the room and cheese temperatures, ensure doors are kept shut and monitor any cheeses that do start to turn."

"Cheese placement is also a big factor, he advises. "Certain cheeses tend to turn quicker depending on location and airflow in the cheese room."

"We regularly monitor cheese temperatures throughout the day and log them, we also rotate stock as well as ensuring they are wrapped appropriately. All this helps ensure that little cheese is wasted and safety guidelines are met."

Victoria's Cheeses, Ely

Victoria Dunthorne of Victoria's Cheeses faced an all-too common challenge when her refrigeration failed during the first major heatwave in late June, creating a loss of £3,000.

"The most immediate changes I'm making are to install air conditioning, and I have installed digital thermometers which I can take readings from on my phone and will send me notifications if the space goes above a set temperature." If this means travelling to the shop in the early hours to save her cheeses, that is what she will do, she says. "I also put foil blankets over the cheeses every night."

She emphasised a little-known fact that it is important for retailers to know if they plan to install air conditioning: "you are legally required to inform your local council if you add air conditioning to your space, and they will adjust your business rates upwards."

Victoria has also learned to lower her stock levels in case of future issues; despite selling sizeable amounts of cheese while she is open and nothing going to waste, she has decided she cannot risk the same amount of loss again so will be keeping orders small and frequent. "What concerns me is that my customers are used to walking in here and seeing a bounty of cheese and choice, but that's just not sensible any more."

A positive result after Victoria's saga is the outpouring of love and support that she has received from her local community. "Customers have been amazing and very understanding; they have been spending money with me wherever they can, even purchasing gift vouchers so they can put money into the business now and take the cheese away when I'm back on my feet. A hotel that I supply has offered me space in their walk-in fridge as and when I need it, and suppliers are willing to bring stock on a more 'little and often' basis."

MAKE IT WORK

HOW TO MANAGE A CHEESE COUNTER IN HOT WEATHER

- Keep stock to a minimum to avoid potential wastage
- Keep a consistent note of ambient and cheese temperatures
- Use digital thermometers that you can keep an eye on wherever you are via an app on your phone
- Invest in air conditioning to make the space safer for your cheese as well as more comfortable for you and your customers, but note that this may incur costs you may not expect

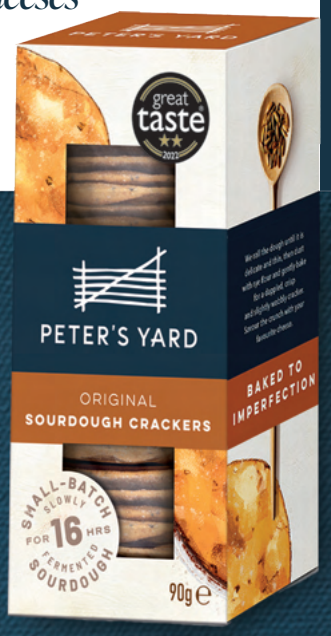
> *Air conditioning reduces how hard the fridges are working, preserving the condition of the cheeses*



PETER'S YARD

IT ALL RESTS ON A GREAT CRACKER

At Peter's Yard, we know good things take time. Our sourdough crackers are made from a 45-year-old sourdough starter, fermented for 16 hours before each batch is baked. Crafted without shortcuts or artificial ingredients for award-winning flavour and crunch.



WILL YOU BRAVE THE BLUE?

LOVE IT? LOATHE IT?

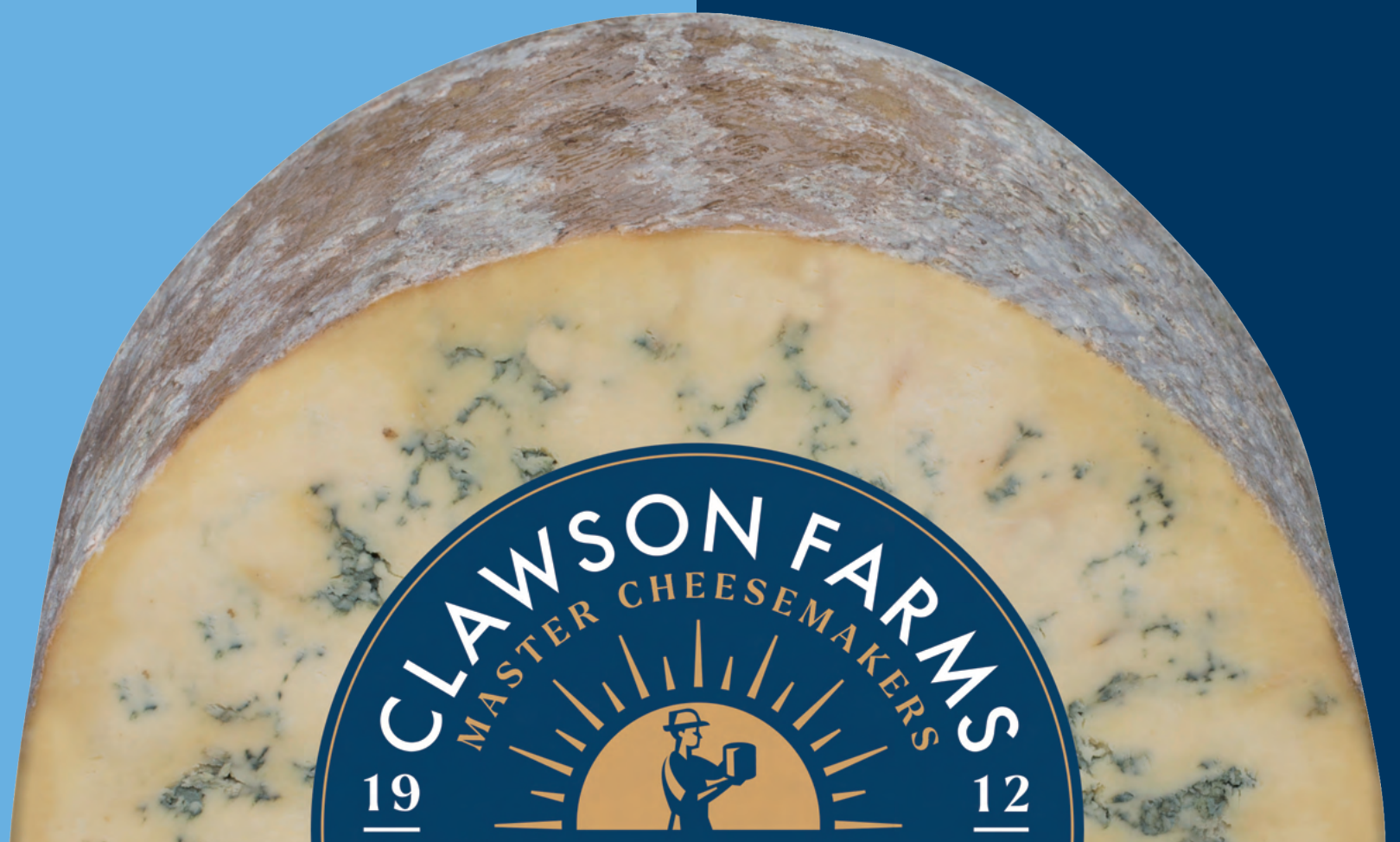
Nobody ignores Stilton®

90% of younger consumers say they enjoy experimenting with bold flavours yet only a fraction of those engage with the British Blue category.

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DRIVE TRIAL – SPARK DEBATE – BRAVE THE BLUE

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The Cheese Report 2026

Passion and innovation are driving Britain's specialist cheese sector to heady new heights, despite multiple challenges on the ground, finds *Speciality Food*



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MATHEW CARVER
THE CHEESE BAR

We have all had multiple conversations with people spanning all corners of the industry who, despite the challenging nature of the cheese and dairy industry, say that they do what they do for the love of it. For the love of cheese, for the love of the artistry of artisanal cheese, and for the love of supporting their local communities of cheesemakers and customers.

While many dairy farmers have pulled the plug on their operations due to rising costs and frustrations with Government, many are doggedly determined to carry on and evolve or feed into the UK's astounding cheese sector. Cheese counters across the UK are also still reeling from the ban on French raw milk cheeses, a topic so longstanding it was covered in last year's report, but retailers are being creative to recommend British and other alternatives to their customers while waiting with bated breath for French raw milk cheeses' return...

From milk prices – most recently affected by this summer's heatwaves and currently sitting at 38-48ppl [milkprices.com] – to the cost of production, wages and the end product, many of the major challenges facing the industry in 2026 are financial.

According to Perry Wakeman of Rennet & Rind, "the honest answer is that the challenges and the opportunities are often the same thing looked at from two angles. Costs are the obvious pressure. Energy, wages, the rise in National Insurance, the price of the cheese itself as farms deal with their own rising input costs. Nobody in this trade is finding it cheaper to do business than they were a couple of years ago. And customers feel it too, so there is real care needed in how you price and what you ask people to pay for."

It helps to approach the situation proactively, he continues. "That is exactly where the opportunity sits. When money is tight, people spend it more deliberately. They want the thing to be worth it. A supermarket can put a 'premium; sticker on a block of Cheddar, but it cannot tell you which farm it came from, how long it has been maturing, or why this wheel tastes different from the one next to it. That is the ground we can win on. Knowledge, service, and genuine curation are the things a big retailer cannot replicate, and they matter more now, not less."

"One of the biggest challenges is making sure the difference between specialist cheese and commodity cheese is clear to consumers, advises Jonny Crickmore, director of Fen Farm Dairy. "Specialist cheese naturally costs more, so it's important that people understand why. That means telling the story behind the cheese, explaining how it is handmade, the craftsmanship involved, the provenance of the milk, and the people behind the product. Communicating that added value is essential."

Indeed, with supermarkets raising their game when it comes to their cheese selections – working with premium wholesalers and sometimes having direct links to the cheesemakers themselves, it is vital that indies make a name for themselves.

"The two things I would say to any independent right now are: be nimble, and never underestimate service," says Perry. "On the first, we are small enough to turn quickly, and that is a genuine advantage. If you think our costs have gone up, imagine that multiplied across hundreds of sites at one of the big commercial operations. They cannot move fast. We can. So look hard at your own numbers. Your staffing levels, your opening hours, your sales data. Work out what is actually selling, what is working, and throw everything you have at it. The shop that pays attention to its own figures and adjusts week to week is the one that comes through a tight year in good shape.

"Service matters more now than it ever has. When someone is parting with hard earned money, they want to know it is going somewhere good, to a good home. Make them understand that. The ace up your sleeve is that nearly every penny spent in your shop either goes straight back into the local economy or, failing that, to the UK exchequer. And yes, I can hear the groans, but that is money going towards the things we all rely on. A nurse, a police officer, the playground down the road. Compare that to a lot of internationally owned businesses, who have a habit of raising an invoice in Luxembourg towards the end of the tax year so that profit, and the tax that should come with it, quietly disappears. Spend it with your independent and it stays where it does some good. That is worth saying out loud to people."

3.1Bn
Food tourism is estimated to be worth £3.1 billion to the UK economy
JANELOVESTRAVEL

"Some of the biggest challenges facing the specialist cheese industry in 2026 are quite different from those affecting the larger industrial or commodity cheese sector," suggests Jonny. "There aren't that many people in the specialist cheese sector, and many businesses are built around the individual who founded them. As cheesemakers retire, there is a real risk that some of these businesses will disappear because they are much harder to pass on than larger industrial operations. Ensuring knowledge, skills and businesses are transferred successfully to the next generation is therefore one of the key challenges facing our industry."

Looking forward

The good news for the premium cheese industry is that the appetite across the UK is growing. "Across the board we're seeing an increased interest in premium cheese," says Mike Hutchins, UK sales manager at Belton Farm. "We've seen in recent data that more families are buying into premium cheese, so whereas historically territorial cheeses tended to be bought by older, affluent shoppers, the net is widening; we're certainly seeing that in terms of sales of Red Fox and Silver Fox, especially as demand for

CONSUMER HEALTH EVOLVES MARKET

Health is a key driver across all sectors of food and drink in 2026, with swathes of shoppers more conscious than ever of the nutritional value – and ingredients fighting against that – they are putting into their bodies. Quality cheese is coming out as a winner in this as Brits recognise the value of a 'less, but better' mentality, with short ingredients lists (milk, rennet, salt) winning out against processed alternatives, plus the use of whole milk and cheese's protein content winning fans.

There is also an understanding that quality equals flavour - with fewer additions to dilute the taste of the milk, a cheese's true characteristics can shine through – meaning that the punchier the taste of a quality cheese, the less of it needs to be used. Alongside this comes creativity from chefs which is inspiring shoppers, too; at Freemasons Arms in Wiswell, Lancashire, Doddington is being used in place of a hard Continental style to add a finishing oomph to dishes.

Cottage cheese is a front-runner too, with brands including Roddas and All Things Butter entering the category from elsewhere in the chiller aisle. Indeed, recent Worldpanel insights have highlighted that market spend on cottage cheese has risen 41.9% to £102.2 million.

"From the consumer perspective, the rise of GLP-1 weight-loss medications is a consideration, with 8.1% of UK adults now reporting they have tried weight-loss injections (IGD, May 2026)," explains Charlotte Forkes-Rees, retail and consumer insight analyst at AHDB. "This could impact cheese demand, either through lower volumes purchased or reduced participation in the category altogether. However, it has unlocked huge growth for cottage cheese and leaner/high protein cheese products."



AN APPETITE FOR NATURAL

Provenance and short ingredients lists go hand in hand in the fine food sector, and cheese offers the ideal opportunity to bring these together. Retailers can paint a picture which will appeal to today's shopper who is more conscious than ever of the 'what' and 'how' of the food they're eating. Meet the

Maker events or cheese tastings offer ample opportunity to tell the story of cheesemakers and the production of the cheese being enjoyed, but feeding customers' desire for pure and natural shouldn't stop there.

Quality milk forms the foundation of excellent cheese, and offers an opportunity to celebrate the grass, herbs and flora at the feet of the cows producing this valuable ingredient.

Make a point of the minimal ingredients lists in the cheeses you sell and – within reason – add colour and detail to the image in their minds of where it was sourced from... Add images and information to your online marketing, and in-store POS if you have space. Trust and the modern perception of value is of vital importance here.

"Raw milk fits very naturally into the growing demand for wholesome, minimally processed foods," says Jonny. "Like artisan cheese, it is only very lightly processed between the cow and the consumer, allowing it to retain its natural characteristics. It is a simple, whole food that many people choose because they value freshness, provenance and traditional production methods."

EXPERT VIEW

The fact that our courses are available to all benefits the wider industry; consumers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable which creates a thirst for businesses to build understanding within their own operations. Both professionals and shoppers are hungry for education, and this is of tangible benefit to businesses.

TRACEY COLLEY
ACADEMY OF CHEESE

vintage Cheddars is growing too. And while flavoured territorial cheeses are generally in decline, they still hold a lot of value in the market and we can boost sales by evolving how we discuss them with consumers – they offer a brilliant opportunity to educate."

In fact, cheesemakers themselves are in some cases pushing the drive to bring back long-lost territorial cheeses; for example, this spring Brinkworth Dairy recreated Wiltshire Loaf. For us, it's about proving that traditional territorial cheeses still have enormous value, both culturally and commercially," says Ceri Cryer, director. Neals Yard Dairy's Eat Them Or Lose Them campaign is fighting for the revival of this corner of the sector.

Plus, new cheesemakers are entering the market primed to excite new and existing premium cheese fans – such as Primrose Creamery, which is sharing notes on its cheese covering information such as weather conditions, pasture changes, make adjustments and affinage decisions in order to "help bridge the gap between producer and consumer, and demystify the world of raw cheese," according to Jake Goldstein, founder.

"There are huge opportunities for the specialist cheese industry," concludes Jonny. "We're moving into a world where people are becoming much more conscious about the food they buy. Consumers increasingly want to know the story behind their food, where it comes from, how it is made, and the ethics



"Despite headwinds, there are several opportunities for the category. Premium tier cow cheese and more expensive cheese types are outperforming economy-tier or everyday cheese products (NIQ Homescan POD, 52 w/e 13 June 2026), suggesting continued demand for speciality cheeses, ageing, craftsmanship and indulgent experiences"

CHARLOTTE FORKES-REES, RETAIL AND CONSUMER INSIGHT ANALYST, AHDB



behind the businesses producing it. At the same time, information has never been easier to access, so people can quickly discover products and learn what makes them different.

"Our opportunity is to help consumers understand that good-quality cheese is a wholesome, natural food made from simple ingredients, without unnecessary additives or artificial ingredients. If we continue getting that message across, the future for the specialist cheese sector is very positive."



UK cheese types: in numbers

"In GB, demand for cows' cheese has grown over the past year, with volumes increasing by 1.9% and value rising by 4.4% to reach £3.8bn (52 weeks ending 13 June 2026, NIQ Homescan POD). This stands in sharp contrast to plant-based cheese alternatives, where volumes declined by 13.3% and value fell by 9.3% to £35.6m.

Mature Cheddar is the most popular cheese in GB, with 77.0m kg sold in the last year, up 0.5% (+389k kg) year-on-year and worth £552m. Extra mature cheddar ranks second, with 37.7m kg sold (+0.8% or +294k kg), generating £292m in sales. Soft white cheese is the third best-selling cheese, with 30.2m kg sold (+1.8% or +522k kg), worth £223m (52 weeks ending 13 June 2026, NIQ Homescan POD).

However, cottage cheese has been the standout performer, recording the fastest growth of any cows' cheese type. An additional 5.7m kg was purchased year-on-year, taking sales to £114m. Household penetration increased to 30.8%, reflecting growth in the number of shoppers buying into the category (52 weeks ending 13 June 2026, NIQ Homescan POD). This surge in demand has likely been supported by social media trends and growing consumer interest in naturally high-protein foods, an area where cottage cheese is well positioned.

Performance among British regional cheeses has been more mixed, with only Caerphilly and Double Gloucester recording growth in volumes purchased. Demand for Stilton and British blue cheeses declined by 341k kg (-8.2%) during the past year. Stilton remains a highly seasonal product, with more than a quarter of annual sales occurring during the four weeks to Christmas (4 w/e 27 December 2025). However, Christmas 2025 saw lower demand than the previous year, continuing a trend that has been evident across much of the last 12 months (52 weeks ending 13 June 2026, NIQ Homescan POD).

Although cows' cheese continues to enjoy a place in nearly all households, with 97.2% of GB households purchasing it in the last year, this has fallen by 0.8 percentage points year-on-year (52 weeks ending 13 June 2026, NIQ Homescan POD). Changing consumer habits may be contributing to this decline.

The opportunity for export

"Exports of cheese have been increasing since the second quarter of 2025 and are now at the highest quarterly level seen in the last six years," says Susie Stannard, AHDB lead analyst (dairy). "Export volumes of total cheese increased by 15.6% (+7500 tonnes) to 56,000 tonnes, year-on-year in Q1 2026. However, there were variations by cheese type. Exports of cheddar and mozzarella cheese increased by 37.5% (+8,900 tonnes) and 13% (+1,300 tonnes) whilst exports of other cheese declined by 18.3% (-2,700 tonnes). Overall demand remained firm due to cost competitiveness of British cheese compared to Oceania."

"Over the years cheese exports have grown following consumer preference for British speciality cheese," she continues. "Challenges are there pertaining to price competitiveness, expanding market access and trade barriers and policy uncertainty. Increasing price competitiveness and availability from the USA due to expansion of cheese capacity may also pressurise British exports, particularly for industrial use."

The import market

"Imports of cheese is also increasing over the years and witnessed an increase of 3% to 115,000 tonnes in Q1 2026 compared to the same period previous year. UK mainly imports from the EU countries like Ireland, France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands and also from New Zealand. In terms of value, cheese imports picked up marginally by 0.05% to £517Mn in Q1 2026 compared to the same period previous year.

"The UK mainly produces Cheddar and premium British quality whereas it imports continental and speciality cheeses," Susie continues. "Consumer demand for speciality cheese is increasing. Foodservice and manufacturing sectors have to import these varieties to meet changing consumer preferences.

New selling formats

While most consumers would love to be able to while away an afternoon chatting to a cheesemonger and revelling in the artistry of having each piece of their order freshly cut and wrapped, that's a luxury for many in 2026.

Smart retailers are rethinking

EXPERT VIEW



Customers increasingly want to know where their food comes from and who made it. That's why we believe specialist cheese counters, backed by knowledgeable colleagues and strong relationships with artisan producers, are more important than ever.

ALAN KIRBY
BOOTHS

MODERN AFFINAGE

Perry Wakeman, CEO and chief of cheese of Rennet & Rind and three-time winner of Affineur of the Year Award, on 2026's take on affinage

"You can be as adventurous as your understanding allows, and that last part matters. Affinage rewards curiosity but it punishes guesswork. The interesting work happens when you know the cheese well enough to know what it can take. Washing a rind, changing how something is wrapped, holding a cheese longer than the maker normally would, trying a technique on a base you would not expect. Some of my favourite results have come from treating a familiar cheese in an unfamiliar way and seeing where it goes.

"British affinage is young compared to France, and I mean that as a good thing. We are not weighed down by hundreds of years of 'this is how it must be done'. There is genuine room to experiment, and more retailers and makers are starting to take maturing seriously as a craft in its own right rather than just storage. That is the real trend. Affinage is moving from being something that happens to cheese in transit to being a deliberate, skilled stage that people are proud to talk about.

"My advice to anyone getting into it is to be adventurous with your thinking but disciplined with your practice. Keep notes. Taste constantly. Be willing to lose a wheel or two learning something. The cheese will tell you what it wants if you pay attention.

"None of this works without the makers. We can mature a cheese beautifully, but we are always finishing something that began on a farm with someone who has poured years into getting their milk and their make right. Championing those independent British cheesemakers is the part of the job I care about most. If a piece like this sends a few more people to their local cheesemonger to ask what is good this week, then it has done its work."

"British affinage is young compared to France, and I mean that as a good thing. We are not weighed down by hundreds of years of 'this is how it must be done'"



formats, looking beyond simply having a couple of wedges of cheese ready-wrapped and labelled for harried customers to dedicated chillers which allow shoppers to grab what they need and go (and be inspired to return for connection next time).

Snacking cheese is a relatively new innovation, as shoppers begin to appreciate the satisfying, protein-rich nature of small portions of cheese and brands such as Leerdammer create on-the-go formats.

Victoria Dunthorne of Victoria's Cheeses in Ely sells £10 date night bags every Friday, offering value and convenience. The model is proving successful, with many shoppers coming in to the shop week in, week out for their cheese bags – which change every week, led by creativity not potential wastage. Some other retailers are opting for grab-and-go bags which combine a portion or two of cheese with a chutney and baked good for surely the ultimate lunch out of home.

Online opportunities

Covid-19 was no doubt the catalyst for cheese businesses to pivot to online sales, as bricks and mortar stores often stayed open but footfall was lessened (if not more intentional). While being a delicious resource and hub for your community is key, if reach further afield is on your bucket list it's worth investing in online.

It's still a valuable, and growing, opportunity as demand for subscription boxes is still high – and in 2026, they form the foundation of a great night in. Gathering friends for a night around a cheese board makes for a great evening, especially if the selection has been expertly curated by a knowledgeable retailer and offers a monthly event. They perfectly tap into this year's trend for a big night in, at home.

The Cheese Society, a retailer based in Lincoln, online cheese aficionado Pong Cheese and cheesemakers themselves such as Snowdonia Cheese are all utilising the subscription model to great effect.

Plant-based cheeses

While the number of consumers following plant-based diets is growing, many lapsed vegans citing dairy cheese as the reason they stopped following the lifestyle. Innovation is present but challenging, with few manufacturers nailing the requirement for products that are just as satisfying as the real thing.



"As protein fortification becomes a priority in multiple food categories, the plant-based cheese sector faces a distinct challenge," Catherine Bayard, global product manager for Plant Attitude, Givaudan told The Plant Base. While this market is developing, it still has very little protein compared to real cheese: many products, especially those based on starch and fats, currently deliver less than 5% protein, significantly lower than traditional cheese. Increasing plant protein content above this threshold has been hindered by sensory limitations and functional constraints, including undesirable flavour notes, textural changes and reduced consumer acceptance.

"Research teams must apply flavour science and formulation expertise to address these barriers," she continued. "By analysing ingredient behaviour within complex matrices, studying multiple protein sources and developing targeted taste solutions, they can mitigate off-notes while improving mouthfeel in products containing 8–20% protein."

Larger retailers such as Waitrose have invested in plant-based cheese, stocking ranges from Violife and retailer-turned-manufacturer La Fauxmagerie, but with chiller space at a premium at independent fine food retailers, the choice to stock or not to stock will be guided by their unique clientele.

Sustainability sells

Sustainability is still a key consideration for shoppers in 2026, and manufacturers are greening-up their operations to cater for demand (as well as be future-proof). Whether it's a change of packaging format or a reformulation of their ingredients lists, it's an important factor across the cheese industry.

The environmental expense of dairy farming is becoming increasingly understood, and many operators are working hard to improve factors including animal welfare, reduction of resource use and waste, and questions around feed and production.

The cross-industry initiative The Dairy Roadmap was produced in 2008 to create collaboration across farming, retailing and processing, setting targets around environmental impact. In 2021 it raised the bar to aim for Net Zero emissions, making the UK one of the most sustainable dairy markets internationally.

Food tourism

Food-loving nations have long made destinations of their most-loved foodstuffs; tourists from around the world travel to Naples to experience the birthplace of Neapolitan pizza, and it's virtually impossible to visit Greece without sampling Greek Feta PDO. Swiss cheese icon Le Gruyere AOP has made cheese tourism into an artform with its museum based on a production site, and here in the UK Wensleydale's Visitor Centre at the heart of the Yorkshire Dales hosts demonstrations and activities for all ages, including some themed around their most-famous fans, Wallace & Gromit.

41.9%

Market spend on cottage cheese has risen **41.9**% to **£102.2 million**

WORLDPANEL

On an independent retail front, a great way to play it is to host local cheesemakers for events and celebrate them in your cheese counter. Stock cheeses made nearby that your customers may not be able to purchase anywhere else, and foster supportive relationships with their makers.

After all, food tourism benefits the industry and beyond, with its current value to Britain estimated to be £3.1 billion, according to JaneLovesTravel. 32% of British travellers actively seek food-focused experiences, and farm-to-table experiences are growing 28.5% each year, it states.

CHEESE PAIRING IN 2026

We all know that consumer palates – and expectations – are becoming more mature, colourful and adventurous than ever, so why stop at wine and chutney when it comes to celebrating the best of your cheese counter?

Foodservice can serve up all kinds of inspiration; street food was the birthplace of kimchi-enlivened cheese toasties (a punchy blend of tangy/spicy fermented cabbage and a rich and tongue-tingling Cheddar provides exactly the excitement shoppers are looking for in 2026), and chefs are ever-more adventurous when it comes to how they utilise fantastic cheese in their menus so lose the 'us and them' mindset and gather ideas wherever you are... Including social media.

Wine is not the only drink on the pairing menu; the fermentation of beers, ciders and kombuchas mean they partner beautifully with all manner of cheeses, and don't overlook the raft of non-alcoholic options lining your shelves. We love to serve ginger beer with a biting blue cheese.



The Cut.

The latest launches, news and views from the world of cheese

How to put together a cheese counter in the UK



EMMA YOUNG
THE CHEESE EXPLORER

In the UK we are very fortunate to have access to a wide range of British cheeses and cheese styles, and it can be very tempting for mongers to put together an all-British counter, showcasing our local produce. I highly recommend promoting British cheeses and in particular artisan made British cheeses however I also strongly recommend that we offer cheeses from Europe also which have in many cases been the inspiration for our newer modern British classics.

When constructing a counter, be sure to consider local cheeses and client demand, but do think about other continental classics which cheese lovers know, love and have sometimes already discovered themselves whilst globetrotting.

As varied an offering as we boast, there are several cheeses which we do not make on home soil, those which cannot be made to the same standard on home soil, and which have been developed over decades if not centuries owing to their geographical, environmental and climatic conditions.

One of the most important lessons I have learned in this industry is to never force nature

Advancements in travel and technology have allowed us to explore and learn about many recipes which have inspired certain very successful British cheeses, however one of the most important lessons I have learnt in this industry, more so in cheesemaking and affinage, is to never force nature. Yes, in theory we can make a hard-pressed cheese or a goat's milk blue however some milks are more suited to certain styles of cheese than others and some cheeses are perfected in certain regions and not in others. A Comté is a Comté because of years of know-how, tradition and environmental conditions – not simply heating milk and making a large cheese.

How many cheeses?
How many cheeses – this is a question I get asked time and time again and it really does depend on the layout of your shop, the type of refrigeration, the amount of space and your footfall. "More" doesn't always equate to "better". Boasting a large cheese range can be impressive, but only if the right tools are in place – namely good cheesemongers, stable refrigeration conditions, well presented and wrapped cheeses and an adequate footfall, boosted even further if there is another outlet for re-purposing cheese such as a café or kitchen.

In the UK, a counter without cheddar is a recipe for disaster, so Cheddar must be present. There are many types of Cheddar, so to give your customer an offering of differing flavours and price points you can comfortably offer three – a clothbound, a wax coated and a block for instance. Then you have your territorials – a good Wensleydale, Caerphilly, Lancashire or Cheshire for example are always a good idea and offering a minimum of two to start gives the customer some choice. Next, you have your new age modern styles – Rachel from White Lake cheese for instance or Cornish Kern from Lynher Dairies. Plus, every counter should have a Comté or a Gruyére. These are cheeses that customers adore and cheeses which simply cannot be replicated to the same effect elsewhere.

Adapt according to the weather
Pay attention to seasonality – and not just seasonality but also the weather! Not everyone wants to eat Stinking Bishop and Roquefort in the Summer and the same in Winter, you might not see the same quantity of Mozzarella and Feta sold as in the warmer months. However, take advantage of these fresher styles throughout heatwaves where everyone wants to eat Caprese salads and Watermelon with Feta. Yes, watermelon with feta. Try it.

Listen to your customers and do your market research!
Never forget that a cheese range CAN be adapted! If you find your customers love blue cheeses but your goat's cheeses sit on your counter collecting dust, add more blue cheeses and remove some goat's cheeses. If you're in an area known for cheesemaking, make sure those local cheeses are strongly positioned on your counter! Your cheese suppliers are your partners so you can always ask them for advice too.



ICDA winners named

At the Stafford County Showground on 25th June, entries to the International Cheese & Dairy Awards 2026 were judged and winners announced.

Lactalis – Mainland New Zealand won Supreme Champion Cheese with Bourne's Cheshire Cheese in reserve and winner of The Champion UK, Walo van Muhlenen was named Supreme Specialist/ Artisan Cheesemaker, The Wright Family Dairy won Supreme Champion Dairy Product – Non Cheese, and Booths won Supreme Retail Cheese of the Year.

Ian Luxton, chairman of ICDA said, "After so much hard work by so many volunteers, it was rewarding for everyone to see large numbers attending across both days in support of our industry. The post show feedback has been excellent, and the year-on-year improvements have been demonstrable, with investment in additional carpeting and complete coverage this year. The World Panel presentation was both well received and well attended. It was pleasing to see large numbers in place for the Trophy presentations and both the Supreme Cheese and Dairy champions were worthy winners.

"The ICDA has cemented its status in its relatively new venue as perhaps the most important Dairy Event for networking and meeting customers and buyers alike. The Dairy UK lifetime achievement award was presented to Paul Rowe, recently retired from First Milk and a worthy recipient. A huge thank you to everyone involved during the staging and delivery of this unique and increasingly important event run for the industry, by the industry."

Alan Kirby, cheese buyer at Booths, said, "Awards like these are ultimately a celebration of the cheesemakers behind every product. We spend a huge amount of time seeking out producers who share our values – craftsmanship, provenance and exceptional quality – whether they're making Lancashire cheese just a few miles from our stores or traditional cheeses from further afield.

"Customers increasingly want to know where their food comes from and who made it. That's why we believe specialist cheese counters, backed by knowledgeable colleagues and strong relationships with artisan producers, are more important than ever. We're incredibly proud that our approach has been recognised with Supreme Retail Cheese of the Year."

Lowri Wright, founder of Wright Family Dairy, said, "We're absolutely thrilled to have been awarded Supreme Champion Dairy Product at the 2026 International Cheese & Dairy Awards. To know that our pasteurised Jersey whole milk came out on top after judging by industry experts makes the recognition even more special. It's a real testament to the care that goes into every stage of production, from looking after our Jersey cows and producing high-quality home-grown forage, to gently batch pasteurising the milk and getting it into customers' hands as fresh as possible."

Village Maid Cheese celebrates 40th anniversary

"It's been quite a journey," says Jake Wigmore, director of Village Maid Cheese, which began in a small outbuilding of the home he shared with his wife Anne in Spencers Wood, Berkshire 40 years ago. "Along the way we've won a host of awards at the World, British and Great Taste Awards, and supplied some of the most prestigious venues in the UK, including The Ritz, Sketch, The Dorchester and Buckingham Palace, to name a few. Today, our growing team runs two dairies, 5 to 6 days a week, processing up to 20,000 litres of milk weekly."



White Lake unveils four new cheeses for summer

Founder of the cheesemaker, Roger Longman, was inspired by international cheesemaking cultures to create the new additions to the range, which include:

Persian Gold: a fresh and lactic cheese-in-a-jar which is held in rapeseed oil infused with garlic, basil, marjoram, thyme and peppercorns in a nod to Southwest Asia. It is already an award-winner, picking up a gold at the British & Irish Cheese Awards and two silvers at the Artisan Cheese Awards.

English Pecorino Fresco is inspired by one of Italy's most loved cheeses and is a semi hard sheep's milk cheese, matured for three months for a rich flavour and creamy texture.

Tuppence is inspired by the French cheese Crottin, and can be eaten young for a clean and slightly citrussy taste or matured for a more savoury flavour. It won gold at the Artisan Cheese Awards.

Glastonbrie is a Brie-style cheese, made using Jersey cow's milk for a rich flavour, and boasts notes of mushroom, umami, malt, strawberries and pears. It won a Bronze in the Cow's milk class at the British & Irish Cheese Awards 2026.

"We're always working on something new at White Lake, and I'm really excited to get these ones out there with a load of award wins behind them already," said Roger Longman, owner and founder of White Lake Cheese.

Fen Farm Dairy releases seasonal cheese

The Suffolk-based cheesemaker has announced the arrival of its latest seasonal cheese – Suffolk Punch – which will be coming to an end early to mid-September.

Created to make the most of the nutrient-rich milk produced during the summer, the lactic new cheese has tasting notes of yeast, caramel and hay, as well as the 'crispy bits from roast beef'.

It has a sticky orange rind and very soft interior, and takes its name from the Suffolk Punch horses which historically worked the land around the dairy.

St Jude wins top title at Virtual Cheese Awards

The Suffolk-made cheese was named Supreme Champion in the live-streamed final judged by some of the UK's best-respected cheese experts, after impressing them with its exceptional balance, elegant presentation and outstanding flavour.

Julie Cheyney, cheesemaker at St Jude Cheese, said: "Thank you all so much for crowning St Jude the Supreme Champion. The team and I are absolutely delighted. St Jude is very dear to my heart and has proved to be a wonderfully robust little cheese despite moving with us across three different counties over the years.

"We know what makes her happy and work hard every day to keep her environment just right. To receive this recognition from such an esteemed panel of judges means the world to us."

Sarah de Wit, founder of the Virtual Cheese Awards, said, "Every year we're reminded just how extraordinary British and Irish cheesemaking has become, but this year's Supreme Final was exceptional. The standard was incredibly high and our finalists represented the very best of traditional craftsmanship, innovation and quality.

"St Jude stood out because it delivered excellence in every aspect. It is a beautifully balanced cheese with remarkable finesse and character, and we're delighted to recognise Julie Cheyney and the team with the Supreme Champion title."





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CHEESES THAT I LOVE

LILY MORRIS, MORRIS' OF USK



PITCHFORK CHEDDAR, TRETHOWAN BROTHERS

A Cheddar like no other. Made in North Somerset by the Trethowan Brothers and their team. Named after the pitchforks used to salt the curds. Traditional, cloth-bound and made with raw milk, but with a twist. As well as Holstein Friesian milk they use Jersey milk, which adds an extra layer to the paste. It has a succulent, creamy mouthfeel, with savoury beef broth notes, finishing with a juicy acidity. I always pair it with a crisp in-season apple.



BARON BIGOD, FEN FARM DAIRY

A British brie style that definitely stands up to the French, even perhaps making them feel a little envious. Made by Jonny Crickmore and his team at Fen Farm in Suffolk. He has adopted the same traditional methods they use to make the classics, like the pelle-à-brie ladle and doing everything by hand. Under its wrinkly bloomy rind, a rich golden paste can be found, buttery with lingering vegetal notes. I love stuffing figs with it and then wrapping them with Parma ham.



WELBECK STICHELTON, WELBECK ESTATE

A stunning raw milk blue made by Joe Schneider and his team on the Welbeck Estate in Nottinghamshire. As it isn't pasteurised it can't be classed as a stilton, but personally I think that makes it even more special as it stands on its own, a historical blue revived. A creamy sometimes crumbly mouthfeel with deep umami flavour and biscuity notes towards the rind. Fresh ripe pear goes nicely with it.



LA OVEJA NEGRA MANCHEGO

This cheese I never get bored of. It is so easy to eat! Not just any Manchego, though, this is made by the Parra family in La Mancha, central Spain. The rind is beautiful with a fresh lanolin scent. It's nutty and herbaceous, sweet with a balanced saltiness. This drizzled with honey… Chef's kiss.



KILLEEN GOAT GOUDA, KILLEEN FARMHOUSE CHEESE

A cheese that helped me win young cheesemonger of the year. A beautiful goat gouda made in Galway by Marion Roeleveld. It breaks the tradition of usual Gouda, as she uses goats' milk instead of cow's milk; resulting in a sweet, nutty paste, floral notes and a gentle goat flavour. I love it with sticky fig jam.



YOREDALE WENSLEYDALE, CURLEW DAIRY

I just love this cheese. It is in another league compared to Wensleydale with cranberries. A traditional raw milk Wensleydale made by Ben and Sam Spence in Wensley. It has a supple buttery mouthfeel with a fresh lactic acidity and lemony notes. No sharpness here. Pairs well with a sweet fruit chutney.



The Spread.

Curate the perfect spread with these moreish cheeses and accompaniments



Peter's Yard

1 Made using Peter's Yard's signature sourdough starter which slowly ferments for 16 hours, these crackers are made in small batches and crafted using quality natural ingredients such as Shipton Mill flour and organic fresh milk. Delicious with strong blue cheese.

petersyard.com



Mrs Bridges

2 Liven up cheeseboards with these flavour-packed chutneys from Mrs Bridges. Sticky Tomato Chutney is a deliciously versatile condiment that particularly complements Cheddar, while Hot Sticky Fig Chutney's moreish blend of fragrant sweetness and chilli punch is perfect with strong cheeses.

mrsbridges.co.uk



Sodiaal

3 A must-stock for any specialist cheese counter, Roquefort PDO is an iconic ewe's milk blue offers exceptional provenance, a creamy texture and a bold, complex flavour that appeals to adventurous cheese lovers. Perfect for cheeseboards, cooking and pairing with sweet wines, it adds premium appeal and encourages customers to trade up.

sodiaal.co.uk



Treur Kaas

4 Villa Rosso, a beautiful red farmstead cheese, is a real hit for the shelves. Only matured for eight weeks, so still deliciously creamy and soft in texture. The addition of red pesto, fenugreek seeds and Italian herbs creates the herbed character of this cheese!

treurkaas.com



Shepherds Purse

5 Beautifully buttery with a full, rounded flavour and a slightly peppery finish, internationally award-winning Harrogate Blue is handcrafted on the Bell family farm in North Yorkshire using local cow's milk. A cheeseboard staple, it pairs perfectly with fruity chutneys and sweet treats such as ginger biscuits and dark chocolate.

shepherdspurse.co.uk



Le Gruyère AOP

6 An ever-popular cheese from the western cantons of Switzerland, the award-winning Gruyère AOP has long been revered for its unique and delicious flavour. It is made with raw milk sourced from a small cluster of dairy farmers in the region, which is transformed by master cheesemakers using customs shared throughout the generations.

gruyere.com/en



Snowdonia Cheese Co

7 Rich, crumbly mature Cheddar is blended with sweet caramelised red onion chutney and Giusti 3 Gold Medals Balsamic Vinegar of Modena, creating a perfectly balanced combination of savoury, sweet and tangy flavours. Ideal for cheeseboards, sandwiches or cooking, it delivers a deliciously indulgent twist on a classic British cheese.

snowdoniacheese.co.uk


3
4
Villa Rosso
Formaggio Pesto Fermier
5
6
GB HN006
AWARD WINNING
SHEPHERDS PURSE
Artisan Cheeses
HARROGATE BLUE®
Our exclusive golden-bodied, blue-veined cheese, made with milk from classy Yorkshire cows
WORLD CHEESE AWARDS
Shepherds Purse has been an award winning artisan cheese maker since 1987. Our family run business was founded by Judy Bell, who began hand-crafting cheeses on the farmhouse kitchen table. After 35 years, our passion and reputation for quality and flavour remains unrivalled.
PROUDLY MADE IN YORKSHIRE
USE BY: SEE BASE. KEEP REFRIGERATED 2-5°C
SUITABLE FOR VEGETARIANS. CONTAINS COW'S MILK
COLOUR: ANNATTO NORBIXIN

Talk of the Tipple

From nostalgia-tinged releases to all-out innovation, the drinks industry is offering plenty to savour



CONTRIBUTORS



ROSIE LEES
N94 AGENCY



GEORGE BAGOS
THREE CENTS



CLEM YATES
LYME BAY WINERY

Wust as churches, libraries ith the mercury resolutely high this summer, there's never been a better time to explore the drinks industry for the hottest (excuse the pun) drinks trends quenching consumers' thirsts right now. Some trends, like botanicals in everything from soft drinks to spirits, and fruit beers for a flavour-packed option that will widen your beer-buying customer base are still going strong, while nostalgia-tinged drinks that straddle the demands for indulgent – Swiss Roll Stout, anyone? – and reminiscent follow on from the industry-wide appetite for childhood favourites (some with an alcoholic twist).

Read on to find out about more of the drinks trends your customers are thirsty for this summer and beyond.

Moderation is here to stay

Rosie Lees, N94 Agency, a drinks marketing agency, and the co-founder of Lecce Cocktail Week and Brighton Whisky Weekend says that, "moderation is here to stay. It gets thrown around a lot the Gen Z are the 'boring' generation who don't drink but actually data suggests that they ARE drinking, they're just drinking in moderation and often opting for the plethora of non-alcoholic or low alcohol options that have started emerging and becoming more commercially available."

"I think that we'll see more low/no brands become mainstream and more innovation in that area of the drinks industry."

Function will also continue to win out, says Rosie. "The functional beverage category will continue to grow but I think that there will begin to be more scrutiny into what counts as a functional beverage and certain claims will begin to be challenged. The category is growing so rapidly and so I think that bigger brands will start to take notice and produce their own products."

A new age for whisky

"What began as a major trend in Asia – the whisky and soda – is now resonating here with an unlikely audience; Gen Z," says George Bagos, general manager and co-founder of Three Cents. "Opting for quality, not quantity and luxury experiences, younger drinkers are appreciating modern whiskies in lighter and more approachable formats like the highball.

"Specifically, whisky and ginger ale has seen a recent revival as a trendy mixer and spirit choice and even for simple, at-home serves, drinkers are using premium ginger ales that complement the rich flavours of quality whiskies. The use of specific, high-quality mixers is a key part of this trend, moving away from generic options."

"I hope that whisky continues to be more accessible, there are still stereotypes related to whisky but I think the rise of the whisky highball and the encouragement to enjoy it 'as you like' will mean that the audience of whisky drinkers will continue to grow – because what's nicer in this weather than a simple whisky highball!" Rosie says.

Stock up on fortified wine and tonics

We all have memories of our grandparents supping on port, and it is a standout partner for rich cheeses, but a new wave of serving styles is bringing it into 2026 – and younger generations are going wild for it.

"Be it a port, sherry or vermouth with tonic, fortified wine spritzers are the latest craze," says George. "There are so many different styles ranging between dry and sweet when it comes to the base of the drink, so it enables bar-goers to really explore and graduate through the category to find a style that s uits their taste. As port and sherry shake off their reputation as an old-fashioned drink, we've got our eyes on this as summer's go to refreshing serve."

Aperitivo goes mainstream

Brits have long been inspired by the laid-back, hyper-sociable drinking habits of our Continental cousins, and the aperitivo mode of enjoying a tipple or two is becoming a longstanding trend.

"The new and sophisticated take on happy hour, the perfect aperitivo varies by palate, mood and the moment," explains George. "As hours of working become more flexible, happy hour traditions are shifting, with drinkers choosing earlier and lighter moments of

> *As port and sherry shake off their reputation as an old-fashioned drink, we've got our eyes on this as summer's go-to refreshing serve*

SPECIALITY FOOD Stock Check 26



Jiddler's Tipple Swiss Roll Stout
All the joy of a classic chocolate dessert rolled into a luxuriously smooth and comforting beer.
jiddlerstipple.com



JARR Kombucha Passionfuit
A tropical and refreshing kombucha with the vibrant, sweet-tart flavour of passion fruit.
jarrkombucha.com



Circumstance Organic Single Grain Rye Whisky
A long fermented rye whisky with notes of toffee, vanilla, spice and stone fruit.
circumstancedistillery.com



Rocks Zesty Lemon Sparkling Can
Made simply from squished whole lemons, pure sparkling water and natural sugar.
rocksdrinks.co.uk



Two Farmers Alcohol-free Cider
One of the first de-alcoholised artisan ciders to be produced using state-of-the-art cold filtration technology.
twofarmerscider.co.uk



Belvoir Farm Non-Alcoholic Lime & Yuzu Mojito Mocktail
Made using freshly squeezed lime juice blended with yuzu juice and a hint of mint.
belvoirfarm.co.uk

TOP TIPS

ENGLISH WINE AT A GLANCE, COURTESY OF CLEM YATES MW, HEAD WINEMAKER AT LYME BAY WINERY

- English rosés getting darker in colour - Producers are bucking the trend of very pale rosé and are choosing to keep the richer colours from the high quality 2025 harvest. Reducing the colour sacrifices aromas and flavours.
- New grape varieties to watch out for - Sauvignon Blanc grapes can ripen in England, so watch for more of this variety popping up in shops in the UK.
- Site specific releases - The Crouch valley in Essex is establishing itself as the premium region for still wine grapes. Check out Bacchus Block from Lyme Bay Winery, made using grapes sourced from Martin's Lane in the Crouch valley, it is a recent silver medal winner in the Decanter World Wine Awards.
- Bacchus loves its skins - An increasing number of producers are fermenting the English Bacchus grape on its skins. This grape has a natural affinity to this process, producing a wine with wonderful tropical fruit flavour balanced with a slight dryness from the compounds found in the grape skins (polyphenols).



51%
of younger legal-age consumers in France and **34%** in the United States prefer earlier social evenings
Bacardi Global Consumer Survey

indulgence. The report notes a rise in end-of-work-day cocktails enjoyed in the late afternoon. Younger legal-age consumers are driving this shift, with 51% in France and 34% in the United States preferring earlier social evenings, as reflected in the Bacardi Global Consumer Survey."

Mixers drive decision

Mixers used to be a pretty standardised affair, with a small handful of options: tonic water, Indian or plain; cola; lemonade or sparkling water. These days the landscape is looking much more exciting, with a myriad of flavour options within each of those categories as well as products designed for specific spirits as well as versatile options to cater for the time-poor shopper.

"It used to be the case that people chose cocktails by the spirit base; margaritas for tequila lovers and cosmos or martinis for vodka fans. However, with drinkers valuing flavour above all else, as well as becoming more adventurous than ever, they're choosing drinks based on what flavour profile piques their interest most. That means the mixer matters," says George. "A high-quality soda can transform cocktails, adding instant flavour and depth in an authentic way. In spring and summer, the Pink Grapefruit Soda – bright and fruity – is a real winner when mixed with a Tequila Blanco to create a Paloma. In autumn and winter, the Three Cents Mandarin & Bergamot Soda is especially popular, as well as the spicy and fiery Ginger Beer, both offering seasonal aromas and flavours to cocktails and long drinks."



TRENDING NOW

BREAKOUT FLAVOUR TRENDS

Fig Leaf

- *"Fig leaf's flavour profile – a balance of sweet, fruity notes with an earthy, subtle undertone – makes it a year-round crowd-pleaser," says George. "It is truly taking flight here in the UK, with some of the UK's most talented mixologists and on trend bars putting a fig leaf-based cocktails on their menus."*
- *Suffolk-based bakery and coffee shop Pinch wows the crowds with a fig leaf slushie every summer.*

Pickle

- *Pickle-as-a-drink has officially gone mainstream for avant-garde drinkers, with The Pickle House – famed for its pickle-centric range, from straight pickle juice bottles and shots to canned cocktails – now being stocked in Waitrose.*
- *"The Three Cents Pickle Soda is versatile, pairing beautifully with a wide range of spirits, however it is equally delicious enjoyed neat for a refreshing and multisensory sip," says George. "It taps into the booming demand for this on-trend flavour profile across drinks and wider food culture."*

PARTNER CONTENT



PURE AND SIMPLE: INTRODUCING ROCKS ORGANIC

THE MUCH-LOVED ROCKS SQUASH RANGE IS BACK FOR A REFRESHING NEW CHAPTER, SAYS NEIL MARTIN, NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER AT SHS DRINKS



The new Rocks Organic range brings together everything people already love about Rocks, with an added level of certified assurance. Available in Orange and Blackcurrant, each bottle is made using certified organic ingredients and is Soil Association registered, giving families even greater confidence in what they're choosing.

As always, simplicity is at the heart of every bottle of Rocks squash. Each Rocks Organic drink is made with just three ingredients: water, fruit juice and sugar. That's it. No artificial colours, no artificial flavours, no artificial sweeteners – absolutely nothing artificial.

It's a straightforward approach that's been at the heart of Rocks for generations. Trusted by families for over 40 years, Rocks has always believed that great squash starts with real ingredients, but for Rocks, it's simply the way things have always been done. The result is a range of drinks that taste clean, natural and genuinely refreshing – perfect for everyday moments, from lunchboxes to family mealtimes.

Same great taste, now in cans

Alongside the launch of Rocks Organic, Rocks is introducing a brand-new 330ml cans range, bringing its signature natural flavours into a format designed for modern life. Available in Orange, Blackcurrant and Lemon, the cans offer all the same benefits Rocks is known for – made with water, fruit juice and sugar, and absolutely nothing artificial – just in a more portable, convenient format.



"Everything is crafted to deliver a balanced, authentic taste that isn't overly sweet or artificial, just naturally refreshing"

Ideal for days out, picnics, after-school refreshment or simply having something ready in the fridge, the cans make it easier than ever to enjoy Rocks wherever and whenever it suits. And with fully recyclable packaging, they're a choice families can feel good about in more ways than one.



A better choice for families

At its core, Rocks is about creating drinks that parents feel happy to serve and that everyone enjoys drinking. No gimmicks, no unnecessary additives – carefully made squash and fruit drinks with ingredients you can trust.

In both the new Organic range and the cans, that philosophy remains unchanged. Everything is crafted to deliver a balanced, authentic taste that isn't overly sweet or artificial – just naturally refreshing.

Simply made. Simply better.

Rocks continues to offer a reassuringly simple alternative for modern families. Because when you start with real ingredients – and nothing artificial – you don't need anything else.

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MAKE IT WORK

FOODIE SHORTCUTS

- Premium dessert shortcuts offer several commercial advantages during the festive period, from higher basket, reduced decision fatigue for customers to operational efficiency, says Leanne Crowther of The Glorious Mess
- Customers shopping for Christmas are already in a celebratory mindset and are more willing to trade up. A premium dessert can significantly increase the value of a basket, especially when paired with complementary products such as cream, sauces, seasonal fruits, compotes, nuts and curds. Merchandise these items with a special coffee, tea or dessert wine and the basket value has significantly increased.
- Christmas shopping can feel overwhelming. Offering a curated, ready-to-serve dessert solution makes life easier for customers and positions the retailer as a helpful expert rather than just a supplier.
- Compared with fully bespoke fresh or bakery items with short shelf life, premium dessert shortcuts can simplify stock planning and service, as well as reduce wastage, whilst still delivering strong margins and premium positioning. Fine food retailers are uniquely placed to redefine convenience as something aspirational. By stocking elevated shortcut solutions, they can meet the growing demand for products that save time without sacrificing quality or provenance.

Mastering Seasonal Strategy

We speak to experts to find out how the smartest businesses are planning for Christmas 2026

Most of us are no spring chickens when it comes to preparing for the festive season. Following a New Year break (if we're lucky) we return to the festive worksheet to decide what we would do differently or better for the next Christmas period – from stocking decisions to staffing levels, experience and merchandising to events... While you can make the odd tweak here and there, there's no point trying to reinvent the wheel, right?

This is where newcomers may well hold an advantage. With fresh eyes they are able to spot unique opportunities and often view the period with excitement rather than timeworn trepidation and an 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' mentality, so it's worth taking a fresh look at each Christmas that rolls around if you can.

Time to level-up

One thing's for sure: Christmas is a time of shared joy, and with plenty of occasions on the horizon – large and small – shoppers are seeking out snacks that make gatherings feel seasonal and special. "Christmas is one of the biggest snacking occasions of the year, with consumers looking for products that help create moments of connection, celebration and indulgence. From entertaining guests and festive movie nights to gifting and seasonal treating, snacks play an important role throughout the festive period," says Leona McCaugherty, head of marketing at Forest Feast.

Christmas also brings with it a 'level-up' mentality, an 'it's only once a year' sense of permission to indulge that bit more than usual in high quality produce that will make everybody at your table smile. "It's a season when shoppers are more willing to trade up and explore premium products, creating opportunities for brands to drive value and excitement," she continues.

"Christmas remains one of the most exciting times in the fine food calendar. Despite the challenges facing consumers and tighter household budgets, people still want to celebrate and treat themselves and others," agrees Mark Wiltshire, co-founder and director at Diverse Fine Food.

"What we're seeing is a willingness to spend on luxury treats when hosting and gifting. Consumers may be spending more carefully, but they're still looking for moments of indulgence and products that help make Christmas feel special," he says. "Retailers who focus on quality, discovery, storytelling and creating moments of joy will be well placed for a successful festive season."

Sticking to tried and tested products that sell well every festive season is all well and good, but consider branching out into flavours and formats you may have not sold before to tempt a wider range of tastebuds. "Having a comprehensive range is essential because shopper needs become much broader at Christmas," says Leona. "Consumers are shopping not only for themselves, but also for family, friends, colleagues and hosts, creating demand across multiple occasions. Retailers that offer a strong mix of formats can better meet these needs and maximise sales opportunities."

Catering for busy shoppers

As well as being on the hunt for seasonal indulgence, consumers are often busier than ever. Yes, your customers are likely to have some time off work to flop in front of the Christmas television schedule with an array of snacks and leftovers, but first comes the organisation, the cooking and the hosting.

"Delicious shortcuts have become an essential part of the modern Christmas," explains Leanne Crowther of A Glorious Mess. "Consumers are still looking for food that feels indulgent, special and celebratory, but they're also balancing busy schedules, hosting pressures and a desire to spend more time with family and friends rather than in the kitchen."

Premium products like The Glorious Mess range bridge that gap perfectly. "They deliver the sense of occasion people want at Christmas, without compromising on quality or flavour. We don't want to spend

EXPERT VIEW

Mark Wiltshire, Diverse Fine Food

"Start early and create excitement throughout the season. Curate eye-catching displays, merchandise complementary products together and don't underestimate the power of sampling. Customers are often looking for inspiration at Christmas, so making it easy for them to discover something new can significantly increase basket spend. Create themed gifting areas, highlight products with a strong story and use theatre and storytelling to encourage shoppers to trade up."



"Customers are often looking for inspiration at Christmas, so make it easy for them"



our precious time at Christmas making everything from scratch, but we absolutely want to present something delicious that has that 'WOW' factor," she continues. "And that's so easy with a crafted sparkly meringue pavlova base. Or our cute hand finished mini meringue Christmas trees that immediately sprinkle Christmas magic on any pudding, from a cheesecake to trifle. In many homes, dessert is the 'Ta Da' moment of the festive meal after the main course, so having a reliable, beautifully made option that can be served with minimal preparation is incredibly valuable. A pavlova piled high with lashings of cream or ice cream and berries, finished with a drizzle of salted caramel sauce or a curd delivers this in buckets."

Convenience without compromise is the name of the game. "Consumers increasingly view high-quality convenience as a form of "smart luxury"," says Leanne - "they're happy to outsource part of the cooking process if the end result feels handcrafted and memorable."

Scott Winston, consultant and manager of the Westerham Farm Shop agrees. "It's a question of making convenience premium, which is something the likes of Marks & Spencer has done really well," he says. "We're looking at prepared vegetables, ready-to-serve sides and desserts, and also elements to dishes that people can assemble themselves at home and have it look as though they cooked it from scratch.

Convenience is no longer the preserve of the multiples or last-minute dashes to the corner shop. "One of the most interesting shifts in festive food retail is the changing perception of convenience. Consumers are no longer simply looking for speed; they're looking for confidence," she continues. "At Christmas, people want dishes that will impress guests and reduce stress. Premium shortcut desserts provide that reassurance while still allowing customers to add their own personal finishing touches. Today's festive tables often cater to a wider range of tastes than ever before.

"Ultimately, products like The Glorious Mess range succeed because they combine three things consumers increasingly value during the festive season: exceptional taste, beautiful presentation and effortless entertaining."

£ HOW TO SELL

Scott Winston, consultant and manager at Westerham Farm Shop

Use your USP as a foundation

We have a great reputation for fresh meat, so our Christmas strategy is focused on building baskets with that as a foundation – getting customers through the door for our meat then incentivising them to spend more with us beyond that, whether they're in our shop or ordering with us.

Be reactive

When I worked at Selfridges, we used to tear down everything Christmas-related on Christmas Eve and focus our attention on Boxing Day. There's a lot to be said for catering for what your spontaneous customers are looking for in the moment, rather than for the season as a whole.

Create occasions

Ask your customers if they've decided what they're serving for Christmas breakfast, or for meals between Christmas and New Year. These occasions can be special too – they can be opportunities for retailers, rather than shoppers simply using up leftovers from Christmas Day.

SPECIALITY FOOD Stock Check 26



Billington's Gingerbread
Crisp gingerbread fingers crafted one of the country's oldest recipes.
billingtonsgingerbread.co.uk



Two Farmers Hereford Bullshot Crisps
Gently seasoned with spices and the delicious flavour of the finest Hereford beef.
twofarmers.co.uk



Seggiano Panettone Classico
A light, fluffy and aromatic panettone, handmade in small batches by a family bakery.
seggiano.com



Mrs Darlington's A Cracking Christmas Chutney
A flavoursome chutney laden with apples, cranberries and Christmas spice.
mrsdarlingtons.com



Walker's Shortbread Festive Shortbread Assortment
The maker's all-butter shortbread, fashioned into bells, stars, Christmas trees and Santas. Sold in a reusable, covetable festive tin.
walkersshortbread.com



Forest Feast Candy Cane Mint Chocolate Almonds
Designed for sharing (or not) in a resealable bag, crunchy almonds are coated in dark and minty rippled white chocolate.
forestfeast.com





Trendwatch.

SPONSORED BY Tracklements



Eighties Throwback

From pop culture to plates, the 1980s are inspiring shoppers to look back

The eighties are back?

Well, sort of. Now that enough time has passed for us to look back at the neon decade with rose-tinted glasses, it is inspiring all corners of culture – including food. TV shows such as *Rivals*, based on Jilly Cooper's iconic eighties book, and the cult hit *Stranger Things* which hit its climax on New Years Eve, are no doubt fuelling this appetite.

How nostalgia-driven is this move?

Pretty hugely... It's hard to not have fond memories of the banoffee pies and Swiss rolls we devoured all that time ago, and a baked alaska will never lose its wow factor, so you'll see premium iterations of these flavours and formats popping up on menus across the UK. Confectionery from the era is also playing a role – indeed, Delamere has just announced a partnership with Eighties favourite Swizzels; those seeking optimum Eighties-flavoured joy can relish in their new Refreshers and Squashies flavoured milks.

Are we returning to TV dinners?

Not quite, but the concept of shortcuts is just as popular as it was back then – with a fine food twist. A spoonful of a flavour-packed condiment such as redcurrant jelly can fool diners into thinking that you've spent hours slaving away over a hot stove instead of minutes.

" Take inspiration by shopping your own aisles for the likes of marie rose and mint sauces, and redcurrant jelly, and get creative with the top eighties savouries in your deli counter such as quiche and scotch eggs"

Is the buffet back?

Indeed it is, but these days they tend to be in the guise of grazing boards (much more social media-friendly). "Whether it's buffets or more formal dinner parties, 80s food classics are working their way back into baskets and onto plates as we continue to see people hosting at home more frequently than eating out," explains Becca Chapman, trade marketing, category and insights lead at Tracklements.

"We've seen elevated twists on 80s classics which highlight the journey between classic 80s buffet to 2020's grazing board. For example, in place of pineapple and cheese hedgehogs is mature Cheddar served on sourdough crackers with Pineapple & Chilli Relish, and Strong Horseradish Cream is added to crème fraiche to give smoked salmon blinis extra oomph."

Cheese is big for me. How can I involve that?

Melting cheeses have been increasing in popularity for a while now, but eighties party favourites are also enjoying a revival. "We're seeing growing interest in fondue and raclette as shoppers embrace the wider 80s revival trend and a renewed appetite for nostalgic, themed food experiences at home," says Amanda Burningham, Emmi cheese brand lead. "These fun, interactive dishes are real crowd-pleasers that bring people together and create a sense of occasion. By merchandising authentic products such as Emmi Fondü and Emmi Raclette alongside complementary items like cured meats, pickles, bread and potatoes, retailers can make it easier for shoppers to recreate the experience at home while boosting basket spend across the fixture."

How are the big players tapping in?

Premium grocer Waitrose is going big on Eighties nostalgia, with a headlining tie-up with Disney's *Rivals* show. The sandwich aisle is home to perhaps the most exciting new launches in line with the theme – scotch egg and prawn cocktail marie rose sandwiches, oh my...

Take inspiration by shopping your own aisles for the likes of marie rose and mint sauces, and redcurrant jelly, and get creative with the top eighties savouries in your deli counter such as quiche and scotch eggs.

How can I bring the eighties up-to-date?

One could argue that shoppers are more discerning than they were 40 years ago – sustainability in packaging, quality of ingredients and cleaner labels are all important factors for shoppers in 2026, so don't leave them to one side when sourcing to cater for the eighties trend.

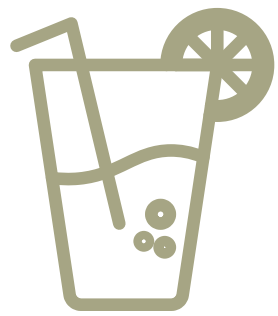
Additive-laden food and drink were standard fare then but undesirable now, so by applying your usual fine food filters you can pick out the good stuff.

Think classic puds made with local eggs and butter; ice cream sundaes layered with cream-rich ice cream and fresh fruit coulis; and scotch eggs with a spicy sriracha twist.



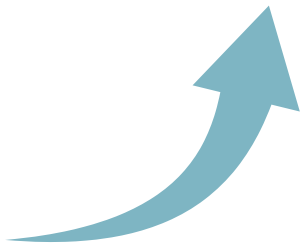
A craving for comfort food is bringing our childhood favourites back to both restaurant menus and shop shelves. Puddings, in particular, will take a nostalgic turn: think Swiss roll and custard, Black Forest gateau, banoffee pie, cheesecake, profiteroles...

Tastewise



Traditional and nostalgic flavours hold strong appeal globally, with **57%** *of consumers saying nostalgic flavours are appealing in food, and similarly* **60%** *in soft drink*

FMCG Gurus



"For food brands, the principle is simple: keep the core cues intact and elevate the execution"

Tom Gatehouse, Egg Soldiers



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Top Christmas Products.

From fine food and drink ranges showcasing traditional fare to delicious new innovations and seasonal twists on classic treats, Christmas is a valuable opportunity to bring in exciting new products to tempt your customer's tastebuds. Read on for our pick of the best Christmas-ready products on the market right now, from cheese to sweet indulgences and spirits...



Drivers Pickles
Sharer Jars

Drivers Pickles large sharer jars offer retailers a standout festive proposition. Featuring favourites such as their 1906 Pickled Onions, Mini Onions, Cornichons and Pickled Eggs and the award winning Old Fashioned Chilli Eggs, these generously sized jars are perfect for Christmas entertaining and seasonal gifting. Crafted using traditional recipes and premium ingredients, they deliver authentic flavour and excellent sharing appeal. Ideal for grazing boards, buffets and festive gatherings, these sharer jars bring heritage, theatre and taste to any Christmas table.
pickle-lovers.co.uk



Loacker
Advent Calendar

Unwrap peak Christmas sales with the 2026 Loacker Advent Calendar assembly kit! Give your customers a daily December crunch of pure chocolaty premium goodness. Packed with Loacker's legendary crispy, hazelnut-cream-filled wafers, this calendar kit offers a premium, globally loved alternative to standard holiday treats. It's an innovative, high-margin impulse buy that stands out on shelves. Fun for all the family. Stock up now to give your shoppers the delicious, elevated holiday tradition they didn't know they were missing!
bestimports.co.uk



Stag Bakeries
Hebridean Baker Christmas Cookie

Bringing together a shared passion for the Hebrides and a baking heritage dating back to 1885, the Hebridean Baker is the newest addition to the Stag Bakeries family. Together they have created a special range of products inspired by the Hebridean way of life. These small batch-baked Gingerbread and Dark Chocolate Oaties are full of flavour and deliver a satisfying crunch. Created especially for the festive season, enjoy them with a cup of tea or coffee, or on their own.
stagbakeries.co.uk



Golden Road
Dry Gin

Golden Road Gin is one of Wales' most highly awarded gins, recognised with gold medals at both the Global Gin Masters and San Francisco World Spirits Competition. Crafted with fresh bay leaves hand-picked from our Pembrokeshire farm, it combines elegant citrus, spice and floral notes with a bottle inspired by the Preseli Hills. Beautiful on shelf. Exceptional in the glass. A gin customers return for time and again.
goldenroadgin.co.uk



Anthon Berg
Signature Collection

Anthon Berg has long been associated with festive generosity, making Anthon Berg chocolates a cherished choice for Christmas gifting. The luxurious marzipan, pralines, and liqueur-filled chocolate bottles are beautifully wrapped and presented in elegant gift boxes, bringing a touch of Danish chocolate craftsmanship to the holiday season. Whether shared at family gatherings, given as tokens of appreciation, or enjoyed as personal treats, Anthon Berg chocolates capture the spirit of warmth and generosity.
hancocks.co.uk/brands/anthon-berg



Cotswold Gold
Festive Feasting Collection

Cotswold Gold's Festive Feasting Collection is a beautifully boxed gift bringing together six small batch condiments from award-winning British producers. The collection features Marie Rose Sauce and Hot Mango Chutney from Lucy's Dressings, Great Taste winning Whisky Butter, Bearnaise Sauce and Truffle Mayonnaise from Cotswold Gold, plus Sweet Tomato Relish from The Wonky Food Co. Every jar is made with all natural ingredients and no added colours, flavours or preservatives. Simply the ultimate present for the discerning festive food lover this Christmas.
cotswoldgold.co.uk



Original Biscuit Bakers
Festive Biscuit Collection

Original Biscuit Bakers' festive biscuit collection combines artisan craftsmanship with irresistible seasonal appeal. Lovingly made in the UK and individually hand-iced, the range features bestselling favourites including the signature Gingerbread Santa, Deluxe Reindeer, Penguin, Christmas Tree and Santa Man, alongside two delightful new additions for 2026 – the charming Snowman and classic Mince Pie sugar cookies. Bursting with festive character and exceptional taste, these beautifully decorated biscuits are perfect for gifting, stocking fillers and seasonal treats. Their eye-catching designs create standout in-store displays.
originalbiscuitbakers.co.uk



Billington's
Gingerbread

Few flavours evoke the magic of Christmas quite like traditional gingerbread, and Billington's Gingerbread has been delighting customers with its timeless recipe since 1817. Handmade in Market Drayton to a closely guarded 200-year-old recipe, these crisp gingerbread fingers are delicately spiced and finished with a subtle hint of rum, creating a distinctive flavour that has earned a prestigious Great Taste Award. Beautifully presented and rich in heritage, Billington's Gingerbread is an ideal choice for gifting, hampers, stocking fillers and festive entertaining, making it a proven Christmas favourite that customers return to year after year.
billingtonsgingerbread.co.uk



Zaytoun
Almonds

These speciality rain-fed Fairtrade almonds are grown by Palestinian farmers across the Jordan Valley, picked and shelled by hand, and then roasted and tumbled with delicious natural flavourings. Discover temptingly moreish Smoked Almonds, Chilli Almonds with a seductive fiery bite, and Caramelised Almonds roasted with Fairtrade sugar for an irresistible sweet crunch. Perfect for celebrating, gifting or simply festive snacking.
zaytoun.uk



Natural Candy Shop
Christmas and Halloween Ranges

Don't miss out on the year's biggest confectionery peaks. Stocking The Natural Candy Company's premium Christmas and Halloween ranges is a guaranteed way to drive impulse buys and festive sales. 100% natural flavours and absolutely no artificial colours, these deliciously spooky treats and festive sweets are a hit with parents and kids alike. Boost your seasonal margins with eye-catching shelf presence. Order your Christmas and Halloween stock today and watch sales soar!
bestimports.co.uk



The Cotswold Cardillo
Christmas Range

The Cotswold Cardillo Christmas range blends Italian baking tradition with Cotswold ingredients to create standout panettone and biscotti. Each handmade panettone showcases a signature ingredient — from rich dark chocolate to fragrant handmade candied orange peel and pistachio crumb — with the Tradizionale already award-winning. Small batch biscotti in flavours such as Almond & Cherry and Pistachio & Bergamot complete the collection, offering a festive range rooted in family heritage, authenticity and exceptional flavour.
thecotswoldcardillo.co.uk/shop



TRUEfoods
Bread Sauce

Discover the perfect accompaniment for your Christmas roasts with TRUEfoods' exceptional bread sauces. Deliciously creamy and comforting, this traditional recipe is gently infused with clove, onion, and nutmeg, using specially selected ingredients free from artificial colours and flavours. For an elegant festive twist, try their sophisticated sourdough version, expertly blending premium sourdough crumbs with subtle, warming spices for a truly unique, deeply savoury flavour.
truefoodsltd.com



Booja-Booja
Winter Collection

The Winter Collection from Booja-Booja is an exceptional, award-winning selection box. A seasonal special, it contains sixteen incredibly delicious, melt-in-the-mouth chocolate truffles. From fabulously festive Yuletide Spice - made with cranberries, nuts and ginger - to puddingy Cherry Bakewell, sublime Salted Caramel Mocha and more; there's something for everyone in this sensational selection. Booja-Booja truffles are made in Norfolk from simple, organic ingredients. They're dairy-free, gluten-free, soya-free and vegan, making The Winter Collection the perfect gift for just about anyone.
boojabooja.com



Union Hand-Roasted Coffee
Christmas Blend

Union Hand-Roasted Coffee raises the standard for specialty coffee. They source direct from farmers, pay fairly and build lasting partnerships. Roasted fresh in their London roastery, every batch is crafted with care. Union's Christmas Blend is a limited-edition seasonal selection from Ethiopia and Peru – medium roast with notes of baked apple, cinnamon and cocoa. Perfect for indulging yourself or sharing with loved ones.
unionroasted.com



Zaman Condiments and Sauces
Gift Box

Bring restaurant-quality Indian dining home this Christmas. Zaman's handcrafted gift box holds four small-batch cooking sauces — Craft Lemon Madras, Craft Coconut Korma, Craft Almond Tikka Masala and Craft Original Curry — each made from a secret family recipe and fresh produce, never powders or pastes. Four recipe cards make a special meal effortless: simply sauté, stir-in and serve. Naturally plant-based, and free from ultra-processed shortcuts, they're a considered gift for anyone who values real provenance, honest flavour and the craft and care in every jar.
zamancondimentsandsauces.com



Frutteto Italia
Jingleberry

Jingleberry™ is a limited-edition festive fruit spread, described by The Guardian as "deliciously aromatic and naturally not-too-sweet". Sun-ripened organic strawberries grown in Campania are delicately infused with cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg for a deliciously aromatic taste of Christmas, without refined sugar. With an RRP of £4.69, Jingleberry™ makes an ideal stocking filler or Secret Santa gift for discerning food lovers. Available from Infinity Foods, CLF Distribution or direct from Frutteto Italia.
fruttetoitalia.com



Summerdown
Gifting Tins

Summerdown's new gifting tins bring the farm's award-winning peppermint range into beautifully designed, reusable packaging for Christmas. Made in London from recycled tin, the Heritage Peppermint Chocolates Tin (300g) holds around 40 Great Taste award-winning peppermint dark chocolate fondants and crisp discs, while the Peppermint Tea Tin (30g) contains 20 Great Taste award-winning tea bags, both made with Black Mitcham peppermint grown and distilled on the family farm in Hampshire. Sustainable and gift-ready, they're an easy addition for festive displays.
summerdown.com



Forest Feast
Truffle & Percorino Roasted Nut Mix

Truffle & Pecorino Roasted Nut Mix from Forest Feast is a new gourmet snack blend featuring slow-roasted peanuts, cashews, almonds, pecans and macadamias, seasoned with zesty Italian Pecorino cheese and enriched with the earthy flavour of black truffle. This innovative offering caters to the growing market for premium, high-quality snacks, providing a standout option in the snacking category.
forestfeast.com



TRUEfoods
Turkey Gravy

Christmas dinner will be unforgettable with TRUEfoods Turkey Gravy. Crafted in North Yorkshire, made as chefs do. Produced from carcass from British farms. Slowly simmered turkey stock, infused with brandy and thyme delivers nostalgic aromas and flavour. Produced from store cupboard ingredients, with no artificial enhancers added. It is the perfect accompaniment for your festive feasts.
truefoodsltd.com



Walker's Nonsuch
Assorted Toffees & Chocolate Eclairs

A festive favourite from an independent family company, Walker's Nonsuch Assorted Toffees & Chocolate Éclairs are great for giving, perfect for sharing this Christmas. Made with whole milk, butter and over 130 years of tradition, this generous 1.25kg jar includes English Creamy, Chocolate Toffees, Milk and Dark Chocolate Covered Toffees, Banana Split Éclairs and Milk Chocolate Éclairs. Gluten free and suitable for vegetarians, there's a favourite for everyone, making it a wonderfully nostalgic treat for all the family to enjoy!
walkers-nonsuch.co.uk



Le Gruyère AOP

Made in western Switzerland, Gruyère AOP has been produced in the same way since 1115AD, using raw milk from cows fed on grass in summer and hay in winter. It is the only cheese that has won the title of Best Cheese in the World at the World Cheese Awards four times, demonstrating how much work and skill is needed to create its unique and delicious flavour. Gruyère AOP can be found with different maturities: the Classic is matured for six months and has a delicate, nutty, creamy flavour. The Reserve is matured for 10 months and has a drier, more grainy mouthfeel. Then you can find an older Gruyère AOP, 14 months or more, giving it a much stronger flavour.
gruyere.com



The Bay Tree
Spicy Tomato & Caramelised Onion Chutney

The Bay Tree believes that taste is one of life's great pleasures, and with the Bake Off culture boosting the idea of experimenting with flavours, many people are discovering that food can be fun and exciting. Made with a sense of adventure and a passion for tradition, The Bay Tree's goal is simple – to make the joy of nature's finest flavours a part of everyday life without the addition of any unnecessary ingredients or preservatives. From catering tubs to hospitality tinies, and a range of consumer sizes, The Bay Tree offers superior preserves, sauces and condiments for everyone.
thebaytree.co.uk



Shepherds Purse
Blue Cheeses

30 years ago Shepherds Purse launched their innovative cow's milk Yorkshire Blue and ewe's milk Mrs Bell's Blue; creamy Continental-style cheeses which have since become firm favourites of top chefs and consumers, both home and abroad. Internationally award-winning and handmade on the family farm in North Yorkshire from local milk, they are a great introduction to blue cheeses with their balanced flavours and sweet, grassy and herbaceous notes. Perfect paired with crackers, fruity chutneys, walnuts and honey or even the Yorkshire favourite, Christmas cake!
shepherdspurse.co.uk

The importance of supporting local producers and communities

Beyond retail and commerce, delis, farm shops and indies can create significant value and have a lasting impact on local producers and communities – and the relationship is two-way, says Kayleigh Rattle

CONTRIBUTORS



MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI



HARRY DAVIES
DE BEAUVOIR DELI



STEFANO CUOMO
MACKNADE

Just as churches, libraries and public houses often form the backbone of a social infrastructure, specialist fine food shops are stepping to the fore not only as places to buy products, but as social institutions that provide value for the customer that transcends the items on the shelves.

Nor is the seller-consumer relationship a one-way transaction; with more customers choosing to shop local and support indies, indie retailers are simultaneously showing their support for local producers and communities, whether that's by stocking locally-made wares, championing local events and initiatives, or donating to worthwhile causes.

Producer champions

As customer preferences and habits change, the role and format of retail continues to evolve. Nowhere is this more evident than in the indie sector where indie stores, delis and farm shops are taking on key roles in the community. "We think a deli's role is far bigger than simply selling food," explains Mark Kacary of The Norfolk Deli. "A good deli should champion producers, tell stories, share knowledge and create experiences that supermarkets simply can't replicate." For Mark, being a gateway between the producer and customer is key, with many customers discovering Norfolk cheeses, local spirits and artisan products through him for the first time.

"Part of our role is to help people understand where products come from, who makes them and why they're special. Recently, a regular customer of ours was talking about their plans for the weekend and how they needed to buy something special for one of their guests who had a lactose intolerance. We had a discussion and it was news to him that in fact most hard/mature cheeses have virtually no lactose in them at all."

> *Independents naturally become part of the wider fabric of a town and community*
>
> **MARK KACARY**, THE NORFOLK DELI

Community hubs

As well as educating customers on the topics of provenance, local suppliers and seasonal produce, indies are also growing to become community pillars and hubs – an interesting hark back to the advent of high street retail. "We're often told that we're regarded as a community hub," says Harry Davies, proprietor of London's De Beauvoir Deli. "Over the years, our staff have built great relationships with our customers, many of whom have shopped with us since we opened 17 years ago. We've employed lots of local young people, offering many teenagers their first jobs. These people have all made a huge contribution to our success."

Davies, who grew up two hundred yards from the shops, only sees these relationships



continuing to build and develop. "Parts of London now function more like urban villages where people shop little and often, rather than planning around a single weekly supermarket trip – and we've certainly benefitted from this shift. We're fortunate to be part of a really vibrant neighbourhood."

This role as community pillar is something the family team behind Macknade have experienced over the years, with there being a long-standing link between farming, food production and community life. "We come from a farming family. The business is rooted in a farm, and farms have always played a unique role in communities and provide infrastructure. Even now, we still have people coming in saying they used to visit as children," explains Macknade CEO, Stefano Cuomo.

"Historically, farms have always relied on community support during harvests and have provided entry-level jobs, and a lot of produce would historically be sold through local towns. Because farms are physical places people can visit, they become reference points within a community. People might visit a deli weekly, whereas they might visit a restaurant less often. That means we become a touchpoint and reference point within the community and a conduit between producer and consumer, telling their stories. We talk about bringing the community together around incredible food and drink, so anything we do needs to feed into that central narrative of what it means to its community."

"One of the things independents offer that larger retailers often can't is conversation, familiarity and human connection," agrees Kacary. "People come in to ask for cheeseboard advice, gift ideas, picnic recommendations or simply to discover something new. Regular customers often stop for a chat, and visitors that we see year after year frequently ask for recommendations about Norfolk food and drink more generally. Food has a wonderful way of creating conversation and connection, and delis naturally become places where those interactions happen."

The local pound

Specialist indie retailers also help contribute to a concept known as the 'local pound'. "The power of the local pound is something we see every single day," says Kacary. "When somebody shops with an independent deli, farm shop, butcher, baker or local producer, the money doesn't disappear into a national system; it tends to stay within the local economy for longer. It supports local jobs, local suppliers, local tradespeople and ultimately helps keep independent high streets alive."

Cuomo agrees, and regularly calls upon a local workforce to build upon this 'local pound' too. "We employ over 85 people locally, and with other on-site businesses that rises to around 100–125 jobs in total. Around 40% of our stock is Kent-supplied, and that includes services as well as products – electricians, builders, accountants, insurance and so on."

"A significant amount of economic value flows into the business and back out again, and a large proportion of it stays within the regional economy. This also has a self-reinforcing effect; if someone recommends us when they are visiting the area, it helps keep visitors in the region for longer because there is a strong network of places to visit."

Relationship building

As well as maintaining close and supportive relationships with customers in the community, developing relationships with local producers is also key, and can have a profound impact on local business.

"Supporting local businesses sits at the very centre of what we do," says Kacary. "A huge amount of our range comes from Norfolk and East Anglian producers, and we actively look for ways to help those businesses reach wider audiences. One of the advantages we have as a deli is that we can combine products from multiple local producers into a single order, hamper or gifting experience. That allows smaller producers to benefit from collective visibility rather than trying to compete individually.

"For us, shopping locally isn't just about buying food. It's about protecting identity, craftsmanship and community. Norfolk has some extraordinary producers making cheeses, spirits, chutneys, sauces, beers and baked goods that deserve to be discovered and supported. If independents don't champion those businesses, many of them simply don't get the visibility they deserve."



"We've always made a point to stock locally-produced goods, finding many suppliers at London food markets," agrees Davies. "We also supply many local businesses and events with catering. 90% of our suppliers are London-based, and well over 50% of our produce is locally-made."

Community players

What's heartening to see is that the support for local suppliers, products and in turn the community is a symbiotic relationship, with communities supporting indies and indies supporting communities reciprocally. "The local community has shaped the business enormously," explains Kacary.

"Being based in Hunstanton means we operate in a seaside town with a mixture of loyal locals, second-home owners, tourists and food lovers visiting the coast. Over time, customers have helped shape everything from the products we stock through to the services we offer. Our cheesemonger's selection boxes, picnic offerings and gifting solutions have all grown from conversations with customers and understanding what people actually wanted.

"Independents naturally become part of the wider fabric of a town and community. We regularly support local causes, collaborate with local businesses and help promote other independents where we can. We also try to create opportunities for local producers by giving them visibility they might otherwise struggle to achieve on their own. We try our best to do things to bring people into Hunstanton."

Davies agrees: "We try to get involved in and promote local events as much as possible. We also plant a tree with every online order, because we believe businesses should think not just about commerce, but about long-term responsibility, too."

"Food has a wonderful way of creating conversation and connection, and delis naturally become places where those interactions happen"

MARK KACARY, THE NORFOLK DELI

EXPERT VIEW

"My advice for delis and indies looking to expand their wares from local producers would be to seek out producers at local markets and invest in those relationships: the local promotion and sense of mutual support can be hugely beneficial to both sides."

HARRY DAVIES
DE BEAUVOIR DELI

MAKE IT WORK

MARK KACARY'S TOP TIPS FOR INCREASING LOCAL BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

- Don't just stock local products, actively champion them.Tell the stories behind the products and the people making them. Help customers understand why buying local matters. Use your platforms whether that's social media, newsletters or your website to elevate producers rather than simply treating them as suppliers.
- Collaboration is key: independents and producers shouldn't see themselves as operating separately. The strongest local food economies are built when producers, retailers and communities work together to create visibility and opportunities for one another.
- Never underestimate the value of knowledge and personality. Independents can't compete with supermarkets on volume or pricing, but they can compete on expertise, authenticity, service and experience – increasingly, that's exactly what customers are looking for.

Last Words.

THE SOCIAL PUNCH



COURTNEY GOLDSMITH SHARES NEED-TO-KNOW INSIGHT INTO THE WORLD OF SOCIAL MEDIA

As we approach the summer months, you might find that while footfall in your shop picks up, your social stats begin to slide and out-of-office messages ping into your inbox with every email you send out.

Summer is, for many, a time of stepping back from social media and rigid work schedules and reconnecting with family and friends. If you're lucky, you might even be able to take some time away from your shop for 'research trips' to sun-soaked piazzas or sandy shores.

Time away, whether it's a week abroad or simply a few days out of your usual routine, can often recharge our batteries and reinvigorate our drive, filling us with new ideas and approaches for our day-to-day lives and work.

Similarly, taking a small step back from social media can be beneficial – not only for your mental state, but also for idea generation. Once you're out of the rhythm of scrolling and posting, you may find that you can see more clearly the direction you want to take, and even a few ideas of how to get there. This can all inform a refreshed content calendar or a realigned strategy when you get back to your routines.

On the other hand, with more people out and about, you might see your engagement levels take a dip. Don't panic straight away. It's natural to have ebbs and flows on social media, and a temporary drop doesn't necessarily mean you need to change your approach. Give it some time but keep an eye on what's performing best. Are certain types of posts slipping past your followers, while others seem to stick? Zero in on what is making successful posts gain traction and see if you can make a few tweaks to your upcoming content to ensure it aligns with what your followers want to see.

Lastly, with summer being a time of carefree adventures, why not reflect that on your social accounts? Try experimenting with new formats and take a more playful approach. Leave your out-takes in your Reels, or even try putting them front and centre. Join in with a silly trend or don't stick to a script on a voiceover. You may be surprised what performs well!



"It's natural to have ebbs and flows on social media, and a temporary drop doesn't necessarily mean you need to change your approach

TRIED & TESTED



Common Coffee
Speciality Instant Coffee

I've never been one for instant coffee; growing up, coffee was always made in a cafetiere and I've carried that habit – plus my beloved moka pot – with me for most of my adult life. But Common Coffee has turned that on its head with this genuinely tasty and moreover convenient instant coffee. Right now I'm making the most of its speed with a daily iced coffee, minus the wait.

commoncoffee.co.uk

GNAW
Matcha Hot Chocolate Flakes



I had never really considered chocolate to be something to drink in hot weather, but this innovative new product from GNAW has changed my mind as it just as delicious served cold as hot. Great quality chocolate flakes with the benefit of antioxidant-rich matcha, this is the perfect example of how decadent doesn't have to mean disastrously unhealthy, and wellness-boosting doesn't have to be worthy.

gnawchocolate.co.uk



INDI
Gut Bar

Healthy food is too often packaged in a somewhat confusing way, with hard-to-decipher benefits and ingredients that very few people can pronounce. That's why I was delighted to find INDI's gut bars, with their clear and wholesome messaging and genuinely delicious taste – think rich dark fruit with crunch from varying-sized nuts. A healthy snack I genuinely look forward to eating.

indisupplements.com

Primadeli
Maple & Smoked Pecan Twists



These are undoubtedly one of my favourite foodie discoveries of the past few months – the balance between sweet and savoury is just right, the pecans add nutty richness, and there's a surprising tang which keeps me going back for more of that delicious crunch... whether on its own, with a glass of crisp white wine or at the heart of a grazing platter surrounded by loved ones.

novel-foods.com

COMING UP NEXT...



We've got stocking inspiration aplenty in our September issue, where we're talking all things **ASIAN FLAVOURS** to help you cash in on this hot trend. **CHRISTMAS BAKING** and **FESTIVE STORE CUPBOARDS** get the *Speciality Food* treatment as we share must-stock ideas, and pros share the **MERCHANDISING** trends making waves right now. Plus, we celebrate the very best of **BRITISH CHEESE** and **HERITAGE BRANDS**.



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STORE SPOTLIGHT



London Épicerie

OWNERS: JARED WYBROW AND RAISSA VAN DIJK
LOCATION: LONDON

What's the philosophy behind the business?
London Épicerie exists because we believe the modern food system has normalised compromise. Flavour, nutrition, biodiversity and provenance have too often been sacrificed in favour of efficiency and scale. Our philosophy is to rebuild the connection between producers and consumers by sourcing food with complete transparency, exceptional agricultural standards and genuine nutritional value. We're not trying to create another premium food shop; we're building a better food system, one producer at a time.

What inspires the team?
Our success isn't measured simply by sales. We look at whether we've introduced someone to a new producer, helped them understand where their food comes from, supported regenerative agriculture, or encouraged them to cook something differently. The long-term health of the producers we work with, the land they farm and the customers we serve are the measures that matter.

Who shops with you?
Everyone. Good food shouldn't be reserved for a particular demographic. Whether someone is buying a loaf of bread, ingredients for dinner or seeking out a rare artisan producer, we want London Épicerie to be an accessible place where people can shop with confidence, curiosity and trust.

What exciting plans do you have in the pipeline?
Opening London Épicerie is the exciting part. This isn't simply the launch of a new shop; it's the beginning of a long-term project that will continue to evolve through new producers, educational events, tastings, collaborations and experiences that reconnect people with exceptional food and the people who produce it.

What do you love most about what you do?
Supporting the future of food production. Every producer we choose to work with represents a different way of farming and producing food. By creating better access to those producers, we help ensure that traditional skills, biodiversity and regenerative agriculture continue to have a viable future.

What's the value of independent retail?
It is simple: curation and human connection. In a retail landscape dominated by algorithms, infinite choices, and cold efficiency, the value of an independent shop isn't just about what is on the shelves, it's about why it's there. As an independent retailer, our job is to act as an editor. We do the vetting, the sourcing, and the relationship-building so our customers don't have to. When you shop with an independent, you are trading the transactionality of a self-checkout screen for an authentic human touchpoint.

How important is education around good food?
It is everything. Without education, 'good food' is easily hijacked by slick marketing. Consumer are bombarded with words like 'natural,' 'artisanal,' or 'organic' on ultra-processed packaging. True food education is what empowers people to look past the front of a box, turn it over, and understand the actual integrity of the ingredients. Food is far more than just a clinical delivery system for nutrients or calories; it is a source of cultural, social, and emotional well-being.

> *Food is far more than just a clinical delivery system for nutrients or calories; it is a source of cultural and social well-being*

Talking Italian

Sponsored by Garofalo



FEELING THE HEAT

BRITS CAN LEARN A LOT FROM THE SUNNIER CLIMES OF ITALY

It's fair to say that the recent heatwaves have knocked the majority of us for six over the past couple of months. As I write, we are all sweating through the second heatwave of the summer – and very much dreaming of lounging with a gelato somewhere on the coast of Italy... No doubt this will be an attractive proposition to your customers too, so it may well be worth considering how you can bring the joy of an Italian summer into your store.

When the temperatures rise many of us choose – or at least wish – to forgo the perils of the oven, so it's no wonder that this is the season of the picky tea. Italy has plenty of inspiration to offer here too – from fresh scoopable cheeses and grana options to nibble on, and taralli and grissini, olives and charcuterie, and of course fabulous extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar to bring it all together, not to mention fresh and vibrant basil. Of course, gelato plays a key role too – lighter in texture than dairy-rich ice cream and often punchier in flavour as a result, it will undoubtedly draw the crowds on a hot day, perhaps even more so than ice cream when in a fine food environment thanks to its mildly exotic, holiday memory-inducing vibes.

Granita is even more refreshing, a simple combination of citrus juice and ice that hails from sunny Sicily – where the folk know a thing or two about basking in the sunshine.

Convenience is even more welcome in the heat, with minds often whirring slower than usual, so make things easy and aspirational for your customers – bring everything they need for an Italian-inspired antipasti board together in one place, direct them via an A board at the entrance to the iced desserts and, if you have space, bring together some al fresco accessories (blankets, parasols, melamine plates) to not only inspire them to eat outdoors but up your basket spend too.



Garofalo

UK Trade Enquiries: info@garofalouk.com
01438 813444 / 07970 295806

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Pasta Di Gragnano IGP

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IT ALL RESTS ON A GREAT CRACKER



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AWARD-WINNING
SOURDOUGH CRACKERS

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