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EDITOR'S LETTER



IT HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT TO CELEBRATE THE PANTRY'S ROLE IN SATISFYING SHOPPERS' HUNGER FOR TASTE, ADVENTURE AND VALUE

As you read through the pages of this issue, you'll see a theme emerge... How much we love a great pantry product. And we're not the only ones – with good reason.

From the retail perspective, pantry products not only offer a way to offer customers a taste of the world from the comfort of your shop, but they tend to have pretty solid shelf lives too; allowing you to experiment with different promotional tools and selling techniques to see what really speaks to your audience.

And from the consumer point of view, they offer familiarity, versatility, convenience, and stability in a world which can seem anything but.

This is where the role of the independent retailer becomes especially interesting, because they are taking such a different approach from the mainstream norm.

Thankfully, we are no longer in a pandemic – despite what the current headline-grabbing outbreaks may suggest – so the need to fill cupboards at any cost is no longer a concern.

We're not dealing with a 'pile them high, sell them cheap' mentality, because that's just not what we do.

Instead, we're providing the opportunity for shoppers to really consider their basics; where the value of them truly lies, and what they can bring to their tables. In other words, why it's worth levelling up from the mass-produced alternatives that have become commoditised.

For example, perhaps you could tell the story of a generations-old pasta maker whose products transform weeknight meals into a much more sustaining, nourishing and exciting dish the whole family will enjoy and benefit from nutritionally. You could stock the honey that is produced by bees who roam the flowers and skies a few fields down from your shop, which as well as being hugely versatile and a delicious alternative to processed sugar can help with locals' seasonal hayfever symptoms.

In my view, the pantry is where multiple missions of the fine food business collide. We have all made it our life's work to support and celebrate those who are creating food and drink that benefits people and planet from the ground up; we are sensitively educating to inspire consumers to do right by their bodies, families and communities; and finally, we are bringing excitement to tables through truly delicious alternatives to commoditised popular products.

> *The pantry products that you so carefully curate turn meals that could be basic into cuisine-hopping feasts that nourish and inspire with genuine value*

The pantry products that you so carefully curate turn meals that could be basic and uninspiring into cuisine-hopping feasts that nourish your customers and provide the versatility and value that they so keenly seek. A noble task indeed.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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Tourism Tax: concerns mount

Inspired by similar initiatives across Europe, the British Government is rolling out a 'tourist tax' and operators across retail and hospitality sectors are raising concerns that doing so could negatively impact the small-scale businesses that make regions appealing to tourists.

Edinburgh is on course to introduce a 5% overnight levy on stays from 24th July 2026 which will apply to bookings made after 1st October 2026, while proposals for an Overnight Visitor Levy Bill that will enable local leaders to introduce a charge on overnight stays were recently announced in England. It is proposed that the revenue raised will be used to invest in projects that improve the area in question.

Here, four experts share their thoughts.



ROSALIND CATTO
BUSINESS ADVISORY PARTNER AND TOURISM EXPERT AT JOHNSTON CARMICHAEL

While the plans are nothing new, they are being considered at a time when the UK hospitality sector is already under significant pressure.

The sector already makes a substantial contribution to the public finances through business rates, employment taxes and VAT. At 20%, VAT on accommodation remains notably higher than in competing European destinations, where lower rates are often applied to support tourism. Against this backdrop, there is concern that an additional levy could place the UK at a further competitive disadvantage.

There are also worries about the potential impact on consumer behaviour. Increasing the overall cost of overnight stays may discourage domestic travel, particularly for families, creating risk as the sector continues to recover and rebuild demand.

For smaller operators, the burden may be even greater. Businesses that are not VAT registered could face disproportionate challenges around administering the levy.

That said, there is recognition that a visitor levy can deliver benefits if implemented effectively. To secure the support of accommodation providers more broadly, transparency will be essential, with clear evidence that revenues are being reinvested into local infrastructure, services and tourism-related initiatives.

"For smaller operators, the burden may be even greater"



POLLY COCHRANE
DIRECTOR AT SWEETCOMBE COTTAGE HOLIDAYS

The cost for people visiting UK destinations could be quite significant. At the widely discussed £2 per night rate, a typical family booking could cost £100 more than it does currently.

Guests who stretch their budget to pay for accommodation may be less likely to eat out at local restaurants and spend less at local shops and businesses. Without a clear commitment to supporting local economies, a tourist tax may cause more financial damage to smaller businesses in the area.

We work closely with The Professional Association of Self-Caterers (PASC), who have done important analysis into this issue. They have found that when accounting for VAT, the UK's overall tax burden on holidaymakers already exceeds the combined equivalent of sales tax and tourist tax in many European countries.

"Guests who stretch their budget to pay for accommodation may spend less at local shops"



TOM WARSOP
FOUNDER OF GOURMET GETAWAYS

Tourism is an ecosystem and hotels, cafés, bakeries, pubs, markets and independent shops all feed into whether a place feels worth visiting. If councils introduce a levy, they need to treat hospitality and retail businesses as partners in shaping how that revenue is used, rather than simply seeing tourism as a source of extra income.

There's also a branding risk for destinations that should not be ignored. Cities and coastal towns spend years trying to market themselves as welcoming, accessible and good value. A visitor charge can cut against that messaging. In hospitality, perception matters enormously. If guests arrive already feeling squeezed financially, businesses spend the rest of the experience trying to rebuild that goodwill. That said, I don't think every levy is automatically negative. In places struggling with overcrowding, reinvestment is necessary. The problem comes when there's no obvious connection between the extra charge and the visitor experience itself.

Food businesses may also face pressure to absorb frustration that has nothing to do with them. When travellers feel a trip has become expensive, restaurants are often where people scrutinise value most aggressively. Expectations become higher and the atmosphere can become more transactional. For independents built around hospitality and experience, that cultural shift can be just as damaging as the financial side.

"If guests arrive already feeling squeezed financially, businesses must rebuild that goodwill"



The Feed.

Insider intel from the world of fine food

Eat out to taste the future



OLIVER LLOYD
CONSULTANT

Earlier this year, in partnership with The Staff Canteen, I surveyed 122 chefs and operators across the UK, from Michelin-starred kitchens to pub grills and contract caterers feeding Premier League stadiums and first-class airport lounges. What came back was a clear view that tastes are shifting and our pantries are becoming more interesting than ever.

The British pantry has always been a quiet record of who we are and the cultures that have shaped our story. Chilli tells the whole story in miniature. In our research, 39% of chefs are using more chilli overall. Not long ago, chilli meant a bottle of Tabasco and a pinch of dried flakes. Then came sriracha, which went with everything. Scotch bonnet dialled things up a notch, teaching me to wash my hands thoroughly after cooking with it. Aleppo pepper is now in every recipe I reach for. Hot Ones, the YouTube phenomenon, has made chilli chat mainstream. As chefs reach for more chilli, they are also seeking out new and exciting varieties that tell a more nuanced story.

Cooking and eating well have become one of the remaining acts of genuine presence

What to watch

Fermentation is a big story with 52% of chefs are using more fermented and pickled foods. Britain has always fermented with rows of Kilner jars, piccalilli and pickled walnuts. What is happening now is that British and Asian pickling are coming together in the same kitchen.

Yuzu is the next ingredient to watch. Where miso is the umami story, yuzu is the citrus story. It is not a replacement for lemon. It is brighter, more floral, a little bitter and a new story. 34% of high-end chefs are using more yuzu against only 17% at the mid-market. That gap is the exact fingerprint of an ingredient in transit.

There is something deeper running through all of this. We are living through an age of real anxiety. Yet the research consistently shows that people are turning to fire and flavour. The same chefs using AI to manage their admin are cooking more over open flames. Cooking and eating well have become one of the remaining acts of genuine presence.

Shoppers seek health, moderation and value

According to Vypr's latest *Consumer Horizons* report, for which UK consumers were surveyed on topics including food, drink, lifestyle and parenting, 93% of shoppers are aware of UPFs with 71% concerned about their health impact and 61% planning to cut down their consumption in the next 12 months.

This could prove to be of benefit for brands offering products with simple and transparent production methods and short ingredients lists, but Vypr also pointed out that not all shoppers are willing to pay more for healthier options than they are already spending on UPFs – 41% of respondents said that they would not pay extra for non-UPF alternatives to what is currently in their baskets.

The report also highlighted that further education around UPFs is needed, with only 40% of shoppers able to easily identify non-UPF products in-store.

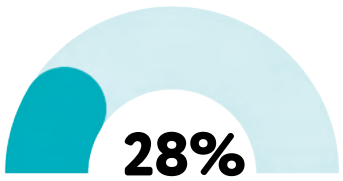
Health is a key driver of shopping decisions, with 44% of consumers open to adaptogenic teas including ingredients such as herbs, mushrooms and root extracts. Of those considering purchasing wellness shots, 39% are interested in ginger, 38% in magnesium and 37% in turmeric, demonstrating an interest in products linked to energy, immunity and recovery. Products displaying claims around sleep and gut health were the most likely to encourage purchase of unfamiliar items.

"The gap between what consumers say they want and what they do, often formed by barriers of cost, confidence, access and knowledge, are preventing intent from becoming action. For brands these spaces are where commercial opportunity lies. Brands and retailers with clear messaging and positioning are needed within this complicated landscape," said Ben Davies, founder of Vypr.

Food manufacturers call for Government support



are calling for government to simplify packaging recycling reforms



for a delay to changes to the proposals on Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM)

Source: Food & Drink Federation



Government should prioritise a fairer, more resilient food chain

Whilst we recognise the cost of living pressures facing UK families – and efforts to address them – proposals to suspend tariffs on key food products raise serious concerns about the impact on the farmers who grow them. Suspending tariffs on agricultural products risks overlooking the preferential trade arrangements in place for lower-income countries, leaving small-scale farmers unable to compete with heavily subsidised, mass-produced exports from wealthier nations. The result can be devastating — pushing producers out of business and deepening rural poverty. Instead of reducing tariffs, the Government should prioritise building fairer, more resilient supply chain – including introducing mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence (HREDD) so businesses are accountable for their global impacts.

Marie Rumsby, director of advocacy at the Fairtrade Foundation, on the Government's proposed tariff cuts on food and drink products

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Fairtrade Tea sales refreshed by UK campaign

The update comes one year after The Fairtrade Foundation's Brew It Fair campaign, with the organisation calling upon Government to introduce a responsible law to level the playing field for businesses taking steps to address environmental challenges and human rights in global supply chains.

The Brew It Fair call led to 99% of MPs being urged by local constituents and Fairtrade supporters to support tea growers and the new Human Right and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) legislation. As a result, 89% signed an Early Day Motion on the topic.

In December, the Fairtrade Foundation delivered its Brew It Fair petition – signed by over 21,000 people – and an open letter from over 250 Kenyan farmers to Downing Street.

Mahsa Yeganeh, Senior Sustainable Sourcing Manager for Tea at the Fairtrade Foundation, said, "We're delighted to see sales of Fairtrade tea rise over the past year. Every extra cup of Fairtrade tea enjoyed in the UK translates into real, tangible benefits for the tea growers who are working hard but struggling to make ends meet. For anyone who hasn't yet made the switch to Fairtrade tea, we would urge you to do so. The more tea growers can sell on Fairtrade terms, the more they can invest in training, strengthen their incomes, and build resilience to climate change - one of the biggest challenges facing the sector.

"To level the playing field for companies that are doing the right thing and tackling human rights and environmental risks in their supply chains, we're also calling on the UK Government to introduce a strong responsible business law for all companies, which must put the experiences and challenges faced by farmers and workers at its heart."



35%

UK sales of Fairtrade certified tea rose by 35% in 2025, the equivalent of 549 additional cups of Fairtrade tea being consumed

Fairtrade Foundation

Government support needed to reduce impact of climate change



The NFU has welcomed several of the recommendations to Government outlined in the Climate Change Committee's recent 'A Well-Adapted UK' publication, including the need to remove regulatory barriers that prevent farmers from adapting their businesses, providing incentives to adapt practices and giving farmers and growers access to the skills and training required to create change.

The NFU's 2025 Decadal Weather Survey demonstrated that British farmers and growers are already experiencing extreme weather events, and that these are expected to become increasingly intense and frequent. As a result, they are taking steps to build on-farm resilience including installing solar panels and utilising different soil types and crop varieties – but the organisation argues that support is needed from Government and the wider supply chain.

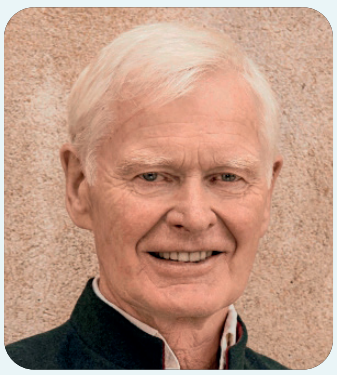
"The report is clear that farming has become increasingly challenging in the UK – changing weather patterns are already hitting yields, farm incomes and long-term business confidence. This is not helped by growing geopolitical uncertainty, with the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East resulting in rising costs for fuel, fertiliser and energy.

"We welcome the CCC's recognition of how extreme weather impacts farming and agree that we can still grow domestic food production, but only if government helps farming adapt now. That means backing on farm water storage, dynamic water abstraction, soil resilience, lowering disease prevalence and removing barriers to growth.

"This report emphasises our long-term ask that government must continue to work hand-in-hand with farmers to target investment in adaption as well as food production and the environment so our members can continue to produce food in a changing climate."

Paul Tompkins, NFU deputy president, responding to the Climate Change Committee (CCC)'s 'A Well-Adapted UK' report which outlines the steps that can be taken to tackle climate change while safeguarding domestic food production.

Sustainability builds resilience



LORD NEWBOROUGH
RHUG ESTATE

For too long, sustainability has been framed as an obligation – something businesses do because they ought to, rather than because it works. I believe that thinking has held parts of the food and farming sector back.

After 25 years of organic farming, I would argue it is now one of the most commercially sensible decisions a producer can make.

When we became Soil Association certified in 2000, it was still considered a major commitment for a farm of this size in Wales. But the principle was straightforward: healthy soil produces healthier livestock, healthier livestock produces exceptional food, and consumers can taste the difference.

The value of organic

That remains true today. Our organic beef, lamb, pork and slow-grown chickens are raised naturally on land that has not seen synthetic inputs for a quarter of a century. Our chickens are reared over 83 days rather than the industry norm of around 30, and our beef is dry-aged on-site before being supplied to leading restaurants, butchers and independent retailers.

The premium customers pay is not really for the certification badge, it is for flavour, provenance and quality. Chefs understand that immediately, which is why the best kitchens increasingly seek out producers who invest properly in land, livestock and long-term standards.

The businesses succeeding in speciality food today are not the ones chasing short-term margin at the expense of integrity

A smart business decision

Sustainability also builds resilience. Businesses that invested early in renewable energy found themselves in a far stronger position when energy markets became volatile in recent years. At Rhug, wind, solar and biomass allow us to operate close to energy-neutral, powering everything from the farm shop and Bistro to refrigeration and the abattoir.

The same applies to shorter supply chains, lower waste and greater transparency. Consumers increasingly want to know where products come from, how animals were raised, and whether businesses genuinely practise what they preach. In food and farming, trust is everything.

None of this is easy. Sustainability requires patience, investment and discipline, especially when cheaper shortcuts are available. But the businesses succeeding in speciality food today are not the ones chasing short-term margin at the expense of integrity. They are the ones investing in the long arc – in soil, livestock, people, infrastructure and provenance – because they understand that durability will always outperform quick wins.

The badge is the easy part. The work behind it is what matters, and increasingly, it is what pays.



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The Feed. On the Go

Sunny weather boosts eating out

30% of UK adults say they spend more on food and drink at restaurants, cafés, bars and pubs on sunny summer days, according to recent research by American Express.

The average UK adult plans to spend 5% more than usual per visit, while 26% say that they would spend longer periods of time eating and drinking.

The research also found that 48% of adults are more likely to dine out during the summer months, with 55% planning to dine out at least once a week and 18% planning to dine out twice a week or more.



Snacking gets strategic as value reshapes everyday eating



ANDY NEWMAN
TASTECARD

Snacking has long been one of the most instinctive areas of consumer behaviour, driven by convenience and impulse rather than planning. That dynamic is now shifting in a more structural way, as wider cost pressures reshape how and why people engage with everyday food purchases.

What we are seeing is not a decline in snacking, but a more deliberate approach to it. Consumers are still participating, but the decision to pick something up on the go or replace a meal with smaller bites is increasingly influenced by value. That shift may appear subtle, but it is materially changing purchasing patterns across both retail and hospitality.

Justifying the snacking moment

This is being driven by a broader squeeze on discretionary spending, where softer retail activity and weaker consumer confidence are filtering into everyday decisions. Larger, planned purchases are often the first to be reconsidered, while smaller transactions remain accessible only when they feel justified in the moment. Snacking sits directly in that space, acting as a controllable, lower-commitment form of spend.

As a result, "little and often" is becoming more prominent, with spending broken down into smaller, more manageable decisions across the day and week. A coffee, a snack or a light lunch becomes a way to maintain routine in a way that feels accessible and repeatable, rather than something that needs to be planned in advance.

We are seeing a shift from impulse to intention, where participation is still there but shaped by accessibility in the moment

A challenge and opportunity

Consumers are not simply looking for lower prices, but for a clearer sense of return, whether through portion flexibility, bundling or quality at smaller price points. When positioned effectively, snacking can drive more consistent engagement than traditional, occasion-led dining.

Within that environment, value is not just about discounting but about making participation feel achievable. What we're currently seeing at tastecard is that loyalty schemes, meal deals and membership-led offers are increasingly acting as a bridge between what consumers want to do and what they feel they can afford to do, with platforms like ours sitting directly in that space between intent and affordability.

This is particularly visible across the day, from more considered morning routines to more intentional lunchtime choices and midweek dining decisions that are increasingly conditional on value.

What this ultimately reflects is a shift from impulse to intention, where participation is still there, but increasingly shaped by whether it feels accessible in the moment.



Comfort, experience and experimentation lead future of café sector

Monin has released its Autum/ Winter 2026 Drinks Trends Report, which found that consumers are seeking out menus that offer nostalgia, escapism and sensory theatre.

The four key trends highlighted in the report are:

Cosy Comforts

With quiet indulgence and nostalgia at its heart, this trend brings together warming notes including maple pecan and toasted marshmallow to evoke emotional memories or home baking and seasonal rituals.

Fruity Flips

Playful, fruit-led serves with modern twists are proving popular across cafe and bar culture, with flavours such as cherry, banana and matcha inspired by social media trends. Banana has been named as a particular trend to watch.

Exotic Escapes

Global flavours such as ube, miso and vibrant tropical fruits allow consumers to tap into their desire for discovery and bold, transportive taste experiences.

Contrast Craze

Drinks that surprise through texture, temperature and unexpected flavour combinations are on the rise – from sweet and savoury blends to intense miniature serves – as consumers seek experience boosts.

On-the-go market boom

Lumina Intelligence's Market Sizing

102.8bn

The UK eating-out market is forecast to reach £102.8bn in value in 2026, representing +1.8% growth year on yea

17.9bn

The QSR sector is forecast to outperform the wider market, reaching £17.9bn (+1.7%), supported by its value-led positioning

Coffee, bakery and sandwich formats are also set to deliver above-market growth

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The Feed. Retail



Younger consumers are **driving** the **resurgence** of **heritage** dairy **products** through **social media** interest in minimally **processed** foods

Grahams Family Dairy

Good food from good people



LISA HOGAN
DIDDLY SQUAT

Diddly Squat Farm Shop wasn't exactly born out of some grand business plan. It started because we found ourselves with rather a lot of potatoes and realised we probably ought to do something useful with them! At heart we're a working farm. The farm shop has grown into a place where we sell produce that's either grown on the farm or sourced from brilliant local farmers and suppliers who genuinely care about what they do.

It's all quite simple really: good food, from good people, with a very firm belief that British farming deserves to be supported, not quietly ignored.

We've ended up with a bit of a loud megaphone, so there's a responsibility to use it properly. For us, that means supporting British farmers, working with local producers, and being honest about what farming can be like: messy, unpredictable and hard work.

Farming is about real people

People we know and work with who are under real pressure. We take it seriously because we've seen what happens if you don't. Farms disappear, and suddenly you've no idea where your food comes from. And because people are actually listening, we can remind them of something simple – buying properly sourced food supports real farmers. 'For Farms' Sake' is not just a new slogan for us. It's a reminder that if farmers don't survive, none of us eat well.

If you care about food, you have to care about farming. You don't get one without the other

Retail perspective

If we don't support farmers and local suppliers, what we have to sell is much more limited. Customers want honest food with a real story, and that only exists if retailers back the people producing it. Do that well, and it's better for everyone.

That's not to say that it's easy. In fact, it's expensive, unpredictable, and often a bit bureaucratic. Doing the right thing, paying farmers properly and sourcing locally costs more, supply isn't always reliable, and there's plenty of red tape to wade through but better food, stronger customer trust, and a supply chain that lasts are just some of the benefits that can come from doing this right. Do it properly, and everything improves, from the product to the business itself.

We hope for a future where local, properly sourced food is the norm and farmers are actually paid fairly for it. Less fuss, more honesty, and a system that works for the people growing the food as well as the ones buying it. Ultimately, if you care about food, you have to care about farming. You don't get one without the other. So the more we look after the people growing it, the better everything becomes.

World Cup offers opportunity for retailers

Retailers are soon expected to shift focus to the World Cup, with data from NIQ showing that almost half of UK households (48%) saying they are interested in the tournament – for those watching late-night matches, there's a clear indication of moderation, with NIQ data showing that only 40% of interested households say they would drink alcohol.

NielsenIQ



"With youth unemployment now standing at over 16% — the highest in more than a decade — this is a key test of Britain's ability to guarantee economic and social stability for its young people"

Emeritus Professor Joe Nellis, economic adviser at MHA, responding to Alan Milburn's report on youth unemployment

Only 25.2% of retailers are actively making changes



The potential restriction or banning of zero-hours contracts has been on the horizon for some time. Successive policy discussions, public scrutiny, and earlier stages of the Employment Rights Act have all signalled the direction of travel. While businesses understand the need for security in sectors such as retail, hospitality and healthcare, many have still not fully adapted their workforce models or systems at the frontline operational level to what is increasingly likely to become a more regulated environment.

Our recent survey at the Retail Technology Show this April found that only 25.2% of retailers are actively making changes in response to the Employment Rights Bill, highlighting a clear gap between awareness of reform and operational action.

Business leaders are understandably concerned about the pace of change and whether they will have sufficient time to implement new operating models. At the same time, reform is being driven by real challenges for workers on zero-hours contracts, particularly around income uncertainty, unstable scheduling, and the wider impact on financial security and family life. For businesses, the challenge is how to preserve necessary flexibility while giving frontline workers greater productivity, transparency and control.

Beyond zero-hours contracts, several near-term Employment Rights Bill measures will also have immediate operational impact. Reforms to Statutory Sick Pay, the expansion of day-one family leave rights, and new duties to prevent third-party harassment will all land directly in day-to-day workforce management. Managers making decisions on shifts, absence, leave, and workplace conduct will face greater legal and financial responsibility and will need the right tools and guidance to apply these changes consistently.

Mark Williams, managing director EMEA at WorkJam in response to the ongoing debate around zero-hours contracts and calls from campaigners for tighter restrictions or a full ban under the Employment Rights Act

What retail can learn from foodservice

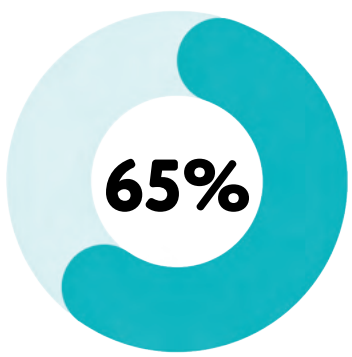
Hot Pickle Innovation Lab and The Staff Canteen, a networking site for chefs, has conducted a study into the evolving attitudes and appetites of UK consumers, and the findings may inspire retailers to update their offering.



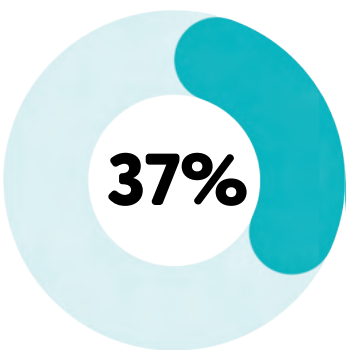
say 'healthy' is deemed to be 'natural' and 'minimally processed'.



are actively using more ferments and pickles



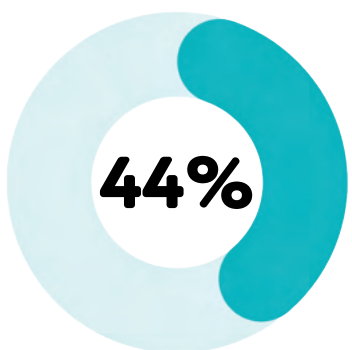
state that 'local sourcing' is the #1 looked for provenance claim among diners



claim that customers are 'trading down' or being more 'price conscious'



cite fish and seafood as the fastest growing proteins on today's menus



say gluten-free has surged past vegan as #1 dietary request

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From kitchen table to retail shelves



POLLY DHALIWAL
ENTERPRISE NATION

The British food and drink scene is thriving, with artisan producers and innovative start-ups reshaping what we eat and how we shop. But turning a kitchen experiment into a commercially viable food business requires more than just a delicious recipe, it demands careful planning, regulatory know-how, and commercial savvy.

Start with the fundamentals. Before you even think about production runs or retailer meetings, invest time in a robust business plan. This isn't bureaucratic box-ticking, it's your roadmap to profitability. Define your food concept clearly: what makes your product different in an already crowded market? Who exactly will buy it, and why should retailers give you precious shelf space?

Be business smart

Know your numbers inside out. The food industry operates on notoriously tight margins, so understanding your costings from day one is non-negotiable. Factor in everything: commercial kitchen rental, ingredients, packaging, distribution, and crucially, retailer margins. Many brilliant products fail simply because founders don't price properly for profit. Test your pricing against your target market, feed your neighbours. Will customers actually pay what you need to charge?

Many founders begin as side hustles; there's no shame in taking the slower, sustainable route

Take the slower route

Get regulatory compliant early. Even tiny producers must follow food hygiene regulations, and as you scale, you'll need proper certification.

Think about cash flow religiously. It's the number one killer of food start-ups. Getting paid promptly keeps you afloat while you're building momentum. Many founders begin as side hustles, reducing financial pressure whilst testing their concept; there's no shame in taking the slower, sustainable route.

THE INNOVATORS

Our round-up of new launches from the tastiest UK startups



Koota Juice Mangosteen & Pomegranate
Made with 85% mangosteen juice and 15% pomegranate juice. No preservatives, no added sugar, no flavourings.
kootajuice.com



Bunta Beer
A 0.5% citrus lager brewed in the UK with orange peel and coriander seed, designed to complement Indian cuisine. Vegan and gluten-free.
buntabeer.com

5 MINUTES WITH...



YANDIS YING
DOT DOT BUBBLE TEA

What would you be doing if you weren't in the food industry?
I'm a designer by trade, so I'd definitely still be creating, crafting, painting, making things with my hands. Creativity has always been my happy place.

What was your first job?
A print designer! I worked in-house at Carphone Warehouse in North Acton designing mobile phone deal brochures.

What inspires you?
My daughter inspires me every single day. Watching her grow gives me strength and reminds me why I do what I do.

What's the worst job you've done?
Working in a toxic environment where everyone was unhappy, it drains you and teaches you quickly what kind of culture you never want to be part of again.

What's your favourite part of your job?
As the founder of Dot Dot Bubble Tea, I'm constantly learning - from the trade, from business partners, from people I meet along the way. I love the challenge and the growth.

And your least favourite?
Being dismissed or even bullied, especially by tradesmen, because I am a minority woman of colour. It fuels me, but it's definitely the hardest part.

How about the food industry?
I genuinely love the food and drink world, it's full of passion, from people who care about flavour and culture. Food is a love language.

What would be your last supper?
A full sashimi boat.

What's your motto?
Joining the dots between taste, culture and community, and celebrating togetherness.

What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?
Duck blood… and I still love it!

What's your favourite book?
Invisible Women by Caroline Criado Perez.

Sweet or savoury?
Both! I could never choose.

Four in **five** Brits **(84%)** believe it's **important** to **support** small **firms**, while **95%** think they add **value** to local **communities**

Small Business Saturday



BRAVE THE BLUE



LOVE IT? LOATHE IT?

There is no-inbetween.

Drive trial. Spark debate.

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clawsonfarms.co.uk

The Feed. Butchery

Beef market struggles



Despite industry confidence in the beef sector being at an all-time high for the last few months, the market is now experiencing oversupply as consumer demand falls.

This spells a challenging time for the beef market.

The Grocer recently reported that the price of beef has dropped at the multiples, farmers are being paid less for their meat according to AHDB, and the industry is also facing the challenge of increased costs.

What are your experiences of selling beef in the current market? Email **holly.shackleton@artichokehq.com**.

People source their meat more carefully than any other ingredient



WILL DOCKER
BALGOVE LARDER

It's sixteen years since Balgove Larder opened. What was originally a series of run-down farm buildings, has become a well-established food destination with a team of more than 110. We have a fully stocked farm shop, cafe, Steak Barn, a takeaway hut, home store, garden shed and run a series of monthly night markets.

We've developed and diversified in many ways but one thing that will never change is our focus on the amazing local produce we're showcasing here. It's genuinely the best part of my job but it's also the reason why customers keep coming back.

Highlighting short supply chains

This is epitomised by our butchery. More than any other part of the business, it highlights the short supply chains that we champion. We use meat from our own farms (and are racing to increase our herd sizes to keep up with demand) as well as carefully chosen carcases from other local farms. There's a huge focus on provenance, welfare and heritage butchery skills.

We've always had a butchery counter and it's expanded a few times over the years – the current development sees us double our chill and production space.

Ultimately the butchery has underpinned our overall growth at Balgove Larder

A demand for quality

There has always been a strong market for quality meat but over the years, we've really seen this grow.

It strikes me that people source their meat more carefully than any other ingredient. This is bound up with suspicion of supermarket supply chains and animal welfare concerns. People are prepared to pay for the best meat because it allays these fears – and when it's also really delicious, this is perceived as great value.

We've seen tastes diversify over the years too. Steak will always be a massive seller for us but our customers tend to be confident cooks. This means that we've experienced increased demand for alternative cuts, including offal. Driving demand for these is important to us – not just because they really are delicious and great value – but because our whole carcase approach means that we make use of the whole animal with little to no waste.

We're also able to use both our café and particularly the Steak Barn as drivers of our butchery. It's hard not to crave meat when you're confronted by the smell of the Steak Barn's BBQ, after all! People can try a range of meats here and we can highlight alternative cuts that encourage sales in the shop.

NFU CALLS FOR BRITISH SHEEP SECTOR SUPPORT

The NFU has released a new report which shares plans on how to secure a resilient and profitable future for Britain's sheep sector.

Supporting British Sheep Farming outlines how the sector can collaborate with supply chains, the wider industry and Government to deliver food security and environmental benefits.

It highlights the need for:

- Retention of all castration and tail docking methods on lambs from zero to seven days old as part of the government's animal health and welfare strategy
- Defra to explore opportunities to remove sheep from all requirements to remove Specified Risk Material, therefore meaning carcasses no longer need to be split
- An ongoing government commitment to safeguard border controls and biosecurity against exotic diseases
- Development of Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) and grants which recognise the importance of grassland and livestock for environmental targets and supports sheep production on all farm tenures and types
- Rural Payments Agency (RPA), Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) and industry to monitor compliance with the newly rolled out Sheep Carcass Classification Scheme to ensure fairness for sheep producers

Clare Wise, a fifth-generation farmer from County Durham and NFU National Livestock Board Vice-chair, said, "British sheep farmers lead the world in production, high welfare and advanced genetics and the sector is the cornerstone of Britain's cultural heritage and rural economy.

"From the uplands to the lowlands, sheep play a vital role in shaping the iconic landscapes, maintaining biodiversity and supporting rural communities.

"But we are facing unprecedented challenges, with producers under extreme cost pressures for feed, fuel and fertiliser, exacerbated by the war in the Middle East. This together with a decline in support payments and an unpredictable climate and extreme weather, has undermined confidence and threatened the viability of many sheep farming businesses, particularly those in the uplands.

"We all want to see a British sheep sector that is profitable, data-driven, progressive and globally competitive, while maintaining world-leading animal welfare and environmental standards.

"For that to happen, we need government, industry and the entire supply chain to back the policies we've outlined in our vision. This will give sheep farmers the confidence to invest in their businesses and maintain breeding capacity, drive growth and build a resilient, sustainable and thriving sheep sector, one that can meet increasing demand at home and abroad."



What the nitrite-free bacon trend means for you

Fine food retailers have the opportunity to highlight local and minimally processed meat as concerns drive consumers away from products like nitrite-cured bacon.

It was front-page-worthy news when the World Health Organisation labelled processed meat, such as bacon, as a cause of cancer a decade ago.

Some of the chemicals linking processed meat to cancer are nitrates and nitrites, according to Cancer Research UK. But in the years since, these have continued to be added to many bacon and ham products on the market as part of the standard curing process.

Nitrates and nitrites are introduced to meat through the curing process. For instance, sodium nitrite is often mixed with salt to create a curing salt that stops the growth of dangerous bacteria and preserves the bacon's flavour and colour.

This is all important for extending the shelf-life of bacon and keeping it safe; however, when nitrite-cured bacon is thrown onto your sizzling hot frying pan, it can create nitrosamines, some of which are known carcinogens.

With consumers becoming more aware of ultra-processed foods and their potential risks, campaigners' data has shown that many are choosing to avoid nitrite-cured meats and instead are moving to alternatives, sales of which are booming.

A spokesperson for the Coalition Against Nitrites called it a "consumer revolt".

While some brands may be looking to move away from nitrates and nitrites in response to changing consumer demand, for many producers of quality meat avoiding artificial preservatives has always been the norm.

At The Organic Butchery, the team has always strived to produce food as naturally as possible. "For us, nitrate-free isn't a marketing decision so much as part of our commitment to transparency, minimal processing and high-welfare farming," explains Russell Burton, head butcher.

"Nitrate-free products are part of that wider movement toward traditional methods and cleaner i ngredient lists.

"Ultimately, flavour and quality will always matter most."

The **value** of **nitrite-cured** bacon sales dropped by **7.3%**, or **£18.7m**, during a 12-week period in January **compared** to the **previous** year. Meanwhile, sales of **nitrite-free** alternatives rose **21.7%** to **£9.4m**

Worldpanel by Numerator, published by the Coalition Against Nitrates



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seggiano.com



7 international trends set to shape UK speciality retail

From punchy Korean flavours to traditional Basque cuisine, we take a look at the global trends that look set to influence customer buying and spending in the UK

Words: Kayleigh Rattle



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1 New York-Italian

"New York–Italian food feels nostalgic to UK diners even without a visit to the city, thanks to decades of exposure through American film, television and music," explains Tom Gatehouse, senior strategist at Egg Soldiers. "That cultural familiarity has paved the way for these dishes to move from reference point to reality on UK menus over the past couple of years."

"Building on the success of NYC-style pizza and bagels, operators are now introducing a wider range of New York–Italian comfort foods. Banana pudding, long associated with New York, is among the newest of on-trend arrivals in London, signalling growing confidence in both savoury and sweet formats. Flavour-infused cream cheese, rooted in NYC bagel culture, is also a particularly interesting space currently, with major players offering broad ranges of infused options such as jalapeño, olive pimento, blueberry, honey bacon sriracha and chipotle."

2 Mexican

"The UK is seeing a noticeable influx of authentic, often regional Mexican styles – largely down to the driving force that is the Gen Z palate – with taco formats providing a clear marker of progress. Barbacoa, carne asada, tinga and al pastor are all emerging as on-trend expressions," says Gatehouse.

"Flavour cues are becoming more refined too. Ancho, chipotle and guajillo chillies are gaining prominence, alongside citrus-led marinades using lime, orange and lemon. This shift towards authenticity moves Mexican food well beyond the tired 'Tex-Mex formula."

3 Middle East and North Africa

"This year's IFE saw significant investment from across the Middle East and North Africa, as Saudi Arabia used the show to showcase premium dates, coffee, seed oils and alcohol-free hospitality drinks," says IFE's event manager Isabelle McKeever. "Algeria brought 20 producers to London as part of a push to grow exports of premium Mediterranean products into UK retail and hospitality, and Jordan also returned with a national pavilion focused on building relationships with UK buyers and distributors."

4 Korean

"Korean food continues to hold the spotlight in the UK," Gatehouse states. "The journey from kimchi to broader Korean concepts has been notable, with gochujang emerging as the standout flavour driver along the way. One unifying ingredient to watch is gochugaru, which has been firmly on our radar for some time. A key component in both kimchi and gochujang, this Korean chilli powder delivers smoky, sweet and subtly fruity notes, with impressive versatility.

"Gochugaru-seasoned fries, for example, are emerging as a quietly on-trend pairing among those in the know."

5 Chilli

"We're seeing customers embrace bolder condiments and flavour-led ingredients. Products like Spicy Seaweed Chutney, Seaweed Hot Sauce and Smoked Bacon Jam have all proved popular, alongside growing interest in chilli-led flavours including chipotle, habanero and Scotch bonnet," says Farmfetch's co-founder, Lauren Johnson-Ginn. "There's a real sense that shoppers are looking for ingredients that add depth, heat and a bit of discovery to home cooking."

6 Basque

"Basque cuisine is best known in the UK for fire-grilled meats, pristine seafood and the now-ubiquitous Basque cheesecake. Given its popularity, it's surprising that a broader range of Basque dishes hasn't arrived sooner – but that's starting to shift," explains Gatehouse.

"Much like Greek before it, Basque is beginning to carve out a stronger presence in the UK hospitality scene, led primarily by higher-end restaurant openings. Across these concepts, familiar threads are emerging. Espelette and piquillo peppers sit alongside anchovies, pil pil and Basque-style chorizo, creating a flavour profile that feels both distinctive and refined. For now, Basque remains firmly premium, but as the popularity of Greek food has demonstrated, wider mainstream adoption could be next."

7 European traditions and twists

"At this year's IFE we saw strong demand for premium products with a clear sense of provenance. The Italian pavilion featured producers including Acetaia Giusti, the oldest producer of Balsamic Vinegar of Modena, alongside olive oil, truffle and pasta brands offering organic and gluten-free lines for modern retail. The French pavilion combined



EXPERT VIEW

"There's a hunger for authenticity"

Matt Hopkins, founder of IND!E



"At IND!E, we're seeing a clear shift towards globally-inspired foods that feel both authentic and accessible to the UK consumer. Korean and Mexican flavours continue to grow as people look for bold, punchy tastes, while regional Italian and Eastern Mediterranean foods are benefiting from a move away from generic 'Mediterranean' labels towards more provenance-led storytelling.

"Regional Italian and Eastern Mediterranean foods are benefiting from a move away from generic labels"

Middle Eastern and South American cuisines are also gaining traction, particularly where brands can balance heritage with everyday usability. At the same time, tropical and fruit-led flavours are cutting through as consumers look for freshness, escapism and natural sweetness. Overall, the brands winning are those that combine genuine cultural roots with formats that fit easily into modern UK cooking habits.







traditional products like smoked fish and speciality cheese with more globally influenced products including Asian-inspired sauces." says McKeever.

"We're seeing strong customer interest in globally-influenced flavours being applied to exceptional British produce. Tinned fish and preserved seafood has become an increasingly popular category for us, particularly products that bring more adventurous pantry flavours into the mix. Smoked rainbow trout, Cornish hake paired with seaweed & butter, and sardines flavoured with chilli, rosemary and capers from Sea Sisters are all resonating with customers – reflecting growing appetite for Mediterranean-inspired ingredients, savoury depth and elevated everyday staples," adds Farmfetch's Johnson-Ginn.

What's in a trend?

"Independent retailers are often in a particularly strong position when it comes to trends because customers trust them to introduce new products in a way that feels approachable," explains IFE's McKeever. "A deli recommending a chilli crisp, suggesting a recipe for a new sauce or explaining how to use a particular ingredient lowers the barrier to entry for customers who want to try something new but might not know where to start.

"That's one of the advantages independents have over larger retailers; they can make food discovery feel personal and curated rather than overwhelming. Paying attention to what people are asking for, what sells repeatedly and what shoppers are curious about usually tells you far more than chasing every viral trend online. Social media is still useful, but it's often better to look at the wider shift underneath a trend rather than focusing on one specific product. The bigger themes right now are things like functional wellness, alcohol moderation, premium convenience and globally inspired flavours.

"Independent retailers are also well placed because they can move quickly and build ranges with personality. Products with strong provenance, good storytelling or a genuinely distinctive flavour profile often perform well in speciality retail because customers are actively looking for discovery and expertise, not just convenience."



EXPERT VIEW

Isabelle McKeever, IFE

"Social media has completely changed how people discover food. Products and recipes that would once have taken years to filter into the UK market can now become popular very quickly through TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. That's particularly true for Korean, Taiwanese and Latin American products, where consumers are seeing recipes, restaurant content and food trends online every day.

"Bubble tea, matcha, chilli oils and fermented drinks have all benefited from that kind of exposure. Gen Z and younger millennials are definitely accelerating a lot of these trends because they spend so much time engaging with food content online. They're more likely to discover new ingredients, recipes and brands through TikTok or Instagram than through traditional advertising. But while TikTok has a huge influence on what becomes visible, that's still only part of the customer base for most delis and independent retailers."

"Gen Z and younger millennials are definitely accelerating a lot of these trends"

"Independent retailers are well placed because they can move quickly and build ranges with personality. Products with good storytelling or a genuinely distinctive flavour profile often perform well"

The Latest.

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

TRENDING PRODUCTS



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



THE ULTIMATE COSY SNACK

The brand's latest launch – Wee Chunkies – is a line of bite-sized and heatable shortbread designed to tap into the growth of evening sharing occasions. Wee Chunkies are packaged in resealable tubs, offering a shareable treat, and combine the business's iconic all-butter shortbread with generous chocolate and caramel inclusions. The biscuits are designed to be reheated at home to evoke the smell of freshly baked shortbread. Bryony Walker, commercial director at Walker's Shortbread, said, "The resealable tub makes them perfect for sharing – whether at social occasions with friends like picnics, watching sports, or simply relaxing at home in the evening."

walkersshortbread.com

THOROUGHLY MODERN WHISKY

Bristol's Circumstance Distillery has unveiled its latest whisky launch: a Barley-led single grain ideal for lighter serves such as with soda and a slice or orange as well as neat or over ice. Circumstance produces its range in sequential limited batches that evolve over time, building on previous batches. The new release has been aged in an Oloroso-conditioned cask which brings richness, depth and the layered sweetness of vanilla custard, fruit scones, nutmeg, dates and mixed peel.

circumstancedistillery.com



Joypots launch Joypouch

The gifting confectionery brand has released a new range of resealable and recyclable sweet pouches designed to boost retail impact and impulse appeal. Available in the new format are Watermelon Slices, Twin Cherries, Fizzy Peaches, Fizzy Mix, Gummy Bears, Fruity Strawberries, Jelly Beans and Red & Black Berries. Dan Brower, managing director said, "We're not known for sitting still for long, and this is exactly the sort of product we love creating, colourful, cheerful and designed to earn its place on shelf."

joypots.com



Flavour-focused instant coffee hits market



Independent speciality roastery Common Coffee has launched a six-strong range of taste-first instant coffees into the fine food market: Strong, Bold, Bright, Calm, Sweet and Complex. Sourced from Latin America and freeze-dried for a long retail shelf life, the packaging is purposefully bold to stand out. "We've always aspired to do specialty without the fluff," said Jason Harvey, founder at Common Coffee. "Coffee gets caught up in language that excludes people, and we wanted to make exceptional coffee genuinely accessible."

commoncoffee.co.uk

New Cajun Barbecue variant from Fairfields Farm

150g sharing packs of the Essex-based crisp producer are now available, boasting a rich, smoky taste profile and the brand's first ever ridge-cut format for maximum crunch and flavour. "Our new Cajun Barbecue flavour is all about bold, layered taste, combining smoky barbecue richness with a warming Cajun spice blend," said Robert and Laura Strathern, co-founders of Fairfields Farm. "Launching it as our first ever ridge-cut crisp makes it even more exciting, as the deeper cut really holds the flavour and delivers an even bigger crunch."

fairfieldsfarmcrisps.co.uk





Birchall Tea launches limited edition summer blend

Family-run tea producer Birchall Tea has brought a new tea blend to the UK market which is designed to be enjoyed during summer's warmer weather.

The new White Tea & Raspberry blend pairs highly prized 'silver tips' white tea buds, hand-harvested during a narrow seasonal window, with real raspberry pieces for a light, floral and quietly luxurious brew.

The release taps into growing demand for rare, provenance-led teas, while offering consumers something elegant, refreshing and genuinely distinctive.

birchalltea.co.uk

Summerdown boosts sustainability

Black Mitcham mint specialists Summerdown have relaunched a number of products in their range to use single origin chocolate sourced from Luker.

"At Summerdown, we've always believed that provenance and quality matter, which is why we've paired our single estate Black Mitcham peppermint with single origin Colombian chocolate from Luker," said Jo Colman, chief mint officer at Summerdown.

"At a time when much of the market is reducing cocoa content, we're investing in better ingredients, greater traceability and long term sustainability because we believe consumers can taste the difference."

summerdown.com







New mayonnaise line from 'Grette founders

The founders of London-based dressing brand 'Grette, Gus Hunter and Juno Jablon, have launched Nnaise, a product range containing proper ingredients including free-range whole eggs and punchy flavours within an attractive format. Available in classic and rich Plain, bright and tangy Pickle, and smoky and complex Harissa, the new launch was developed after they saw an opportunity to improve the quality standards and energy of the mayonnaise shelf and combines minimal processing with small batch-making to provide a product high in flavour and retail impact.

nnaise.co

Summer-ready honey hits shelves

Artisanal honey brand Honey Heaven have released a new variant ideal for the summer: Raspberry Honey. Combining the natural sweetness of certified organic, creamy wildflower honey with premium raspberries which are freeze-dried to retain maximum nutrient and vitamin content as well as their natural colour and intense flavour, the launch is crafted in small batches using 100% organic natural ingredients with no additives. The new launch is ideal for health-conscious shoppers as it is naturally high in antioxidants, vitamin C, amino acids, protective plant compounds, vitamins and minerals.

honeyheaven.co.uk





Cartright & Butler latest indulgence

For 115 years Cartright & Butler has been creating tea time treats, and the business's latest launch combines traditional tastes and techniques with modern-day style. Created using the brand's signature all-butter biscuit recipe, the new Hazelnut & Chocolate Biscuits bring together milk chocolate and roasted flaked hazelnuts for a crumbly and indulgent treat.The biscuits are presented in Cartright & Butler's signature clip lid tins, with a 2026 twist – they are finished in Pantone's 2026 Colour of the Year, Cloud Dancer – making them ideal for gifting.

cartrightandbutler.co.uk

Win at Summer



CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS
GREAT BRITISH FOOD AWARDS

Al fresco eating season has arrived; sunnier, longer days giving shoppers a spring in their steps.

This is a key time to lean into your picnic ranges, which will not only come in handy for beach days and field lunches, but make handy, easy grab-and-go options for the summer's big sporting events – from Wimbledon, to the World Cup.

We know that seeing the British flag on food and drink makes consumers lean in a bit closer – so maybe it's time to invest in a few Great British Food Award winners to bring added clout to your shelves and chillers.

Cheese is a picnic must, and our judges, including Sunday Brunch's Morgan McGlynn-Carr, bestowed high honours last year on the ranges from Village Maid Cheeses and Sharpham Cheese, as well as Golden Hooves Cheddar and Cropwell Bishop Stilton. Raymond Blanc declared Peter's Yard's Wholegrain Sourdough Crispbreads "delicious". And William Sitwell couldn't get enough of Gold-winning Cottage Delight's Spiced Tomato & Caramelised Onion Chutney. Meanwhile, artisan butter is having its moment in the spotlight, and the Great British Food Award-winning Cep Miso variety from Abernethy Butter is sure to turn heads in your fridge.

Products boasting the Great British Food Award logo really do turn heads. Group winners together to give them even more impact

If you're seeking something new, exciting, and expertly judged that will make your shop stand out over the coming months and beyond, take a look at the GBF winners at greatbritishfoodawards.com



NEW

From the makers
of Baron Bigod

KEFIR

A traditionally fermented milk drink high in protein. Made on our Suffolk farm using the fresh milk of our free-ranging Montbéliarde cows. Packed with live cultures your gut will high-five you for.

Fen Farm Dairy

hello@fenfarmdairy.co.uk
fenfarmdairy.co.uk

The Spread.

Enliven your range with these top foodie picks from Northern Ireland

Invest Northern Ireland

Troughtons

1 Troughtons Premium Lemonades from Armagh Cider Company, Northern Ireland, are crafted with pure Co Armagh spring water and all-natural ingredients, including real sugar and nothing artificial. Available in Sparkling Blush, Sicilian Lemonade and Valencian Orange, these refreshing summer drinks come in 330ml and 750ml bottles.
troughtonspremium.com

Irwin's Bakery

2 Irwin's Bakery is making mornings brighter with their new summer fruit loaf Irwin's Banana & Chia Loaf – a soft, lightly sweet loaf. It's a tasty alternative to traditional fruit loaf, delicious toasted with your favourite spread, it's the perfect breakfast or after-school snack for busy families.
irwinsbakery.com

Irish Black Butter

3 Irish Black Butter Salted Caramel Sauce is luxuriously smooth, irresistibly indulgent and a summery twist for your desserts. The rich apple-based depth balances a bright, silky sweetness. Perfect for drizzling over ice cream, fresh berries, or warm pastries. A vibrant, artisanal treat capturing summer's simple pleasures in every joyful bite.
irishblackbutter.com

Prephouse

4 Prephouse is a family-owned business, based in the village of Crossgar in the heart of Co Down. Their sauces are produced in small batches to maintain their commitment to quality and to ensure their flavours are fresh and consistent for every customer: retail, food service or hospitality. The home of hard-working flavour.
prephouse.co.uk

Milgro

5 Milgro's multi award-winning Crispy Onions are the perfect accompaniment for many dishes. Whether as a topping on a salad, burger, hotdog or chicken, or on the side of a steak, they are also great as a snack. They are also available in two delicious flavours: Original and Flame Grilled Steak.
milgro.co.uk

Glens of Antrim

6 Glens of Antrim crisps are hand-cooked in small batches using locally sourced potatoes, seasonings, and ingredients from the heart of Northern Ireland. The family-run business combines traditional methods with bold flavours to create thick-cut crisps with a distinctive crunch and taste, proudly showcasing the quality and character of the Glens of Antrim.
goacrisps.com

Morelli's

7 Crafted with rich Irish double cream and five generations of family expertise, Morelli's Double Cream Vanilla ice cream is indulgence at its finest and proof that a great vanilla ice cream never goes out of style. ICA Supreme Champion Ice Cream 2025.
morellisices.com

Fibre UP

8 Fibre UP is a range of lightly sparkling, fruit-based soft drinks, each delivering 50% of the recommended daily fibre intake. With 96% of people falling short of the recommended 30g a day, they offer an easy and refreshing way to close the gap, naturally with no added sugar or sweeteners.
fibreupdrinks.com




2
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Irwin's
SWEET BAKES
BANANA & CHIA LOAF
SWEETEN UP YOUR DAY
Our sweet bakes are perfect for breakfast, lunch or an afternoon snack
PREP HOUSE
SOUR CREAM & CHIVE DIP
PROPER BURGER SAUCE
made from the PREP HOUSE
RESEALABLE PACK
Fully Recyclable
CRISPY
ONiT! ONiONS
ADD SOME CRUNCH TO YOUR DISH
Original
Flame Grilled
FLAVOUR
HAND COOKED
HEAT OR JUST EAT
great taste
IRISH BLACK BUTTER
Salted
Caramel Sauce
50% of your daily fibre*
Fibre UP
No sweeteners
LIGHTLY SPARKLING
Raspberry Lemonade
Apple & Elderflower
Mango & Passionfruit
FAMOUS ITALIAN ICE CREAM
morelli
Award Winning Ice Cream Since 1911
Share our family tradition!

The Role of Packaging in 2026

Its function may seem simple, but there are a lot of powers at play in the packaging sector right now. Here, four experts share their viewpoints

Brands are focusing on how packaging performs in the real world



ADAM PLATTS
SALES AND MARKETING DIRECTOR,
VPK PACKAGING UK & IRELAND

Packaging is being asked to do more than ever before. It still needs to protect products and perform reliably through increasingly demanding supply chains, but it is also expected to communicate quality, reinforce brand identity and support sustainability goals at the same time.

What's changing is that sustainability is becoming more practical and commercially driven. Brands are looking beyond headline claims and focusing on how packaging performs in the real world. How efficiently it uses material, how easily it can move through existing recycling infrastructure and how effectively it works across retail and ecommerce environments.

At the same time, speciality food brands cannot afford to lose sight of presentation. Packaging remains one of the most powerful tools for influencing perception at shelf. In premium and artisan categories particularly, shoppers expect packaging that feels considered, authentic and aligned to the quality of the product inside.

That creates an interesting challenge for the sector. Packaging must now balance sustainability, operational efficiency and shelf impact simultaneously.

Innovation is therefore becoming more focused on smarter structural design and packaging optimisation rather than purely new materials. We are seeing increased interest in right-sized formats, shelf-ready packaging and fibre-based solutions that reduce unnecessary complexity while still delivering strong presentation and reliable performance.

"Innovation is becoming more focused on smarter structural design and packaging optimisation than new materials"

Innovation is vital, but it has to be purposeful



GAVIN ASHE
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
KITE PACKAGING

The packaging sector is being shaped by regulation, sustainability, cost pressure, and changing customer expectations. Packaging now must do more than just project a product. It must support compliance, reduce waste, improve efficiency, and represent the brand. With EPR and Plastic Packaging Tax, businesses are looking beyond the unit price and considering the true cost of packaging - from damage and transport to labour, waste, and environmental impact. At kite our focus is simple: help customers choose the right packaging to protect their product and brand whilst minimising cost and environmental impact.

Nowadays, consumers want packaging that is practical, protective, efficient, and responsible. They expect products to arrive safely, but they also want packs that are easy to open, easy to recycle, and not excessive. Over-packaging is noticed, particularly in e-commerce, and it can damage how a brand is perceived. Good packaging should feel appropriate; it should protect the product whilst using materials intelligently.

Innovation is vital, but it has to be purposeful. It should solve customer problems, whether that means reducing material use, improving protection, speeding up packing, or making compliance easier; we are seeing demand for right-sized packaging, recycled-content materials, paper-based alternatives, and automation.

Sustainability is central to every packaging conversation. But it must be honest – a sustainable pack is not one that just looks environmentally friendly, it has to protect the product, use resources efficiently, and can be handled responsibly after use. Poor protection causes damage and returns, which creates more waste.

"Consumers want packaging that is practical, protective, efficient and responsible"

Branding is still king of the pack



LAWRENCE BARNETT
MD WONDERLAND DESIGN

One of the defining factors in food and drink branding today is the rise of functional messaging versus emotional brand storytelling.

It's my belief that your pack IS the embodiment of your brand. Confident, distinctive branding on pack is critical to winning consumer appeal.

Food and drink brands, particularly at the premium end, must rely on cues of pleasure, provenance and craft. Consumers buy into a sense of goodness or taste expectation just as much (if not more) as they do nutritional or environmental benefit. Therefore, packaging remains sacrosanct: the primary vehicle for communicating individuality and emotional appeal.

Brands that reduce packs to functional billboards risk diluting the sensory anticipation that makes food and drink brands desirable in the first place.

Consumers are becoming more attuned to brands that balance honesty with enjoyment. The strongest contemporary packaging systems integrate key functional claims without allowing them to overpower the brand's appeal. Simplicity remains a very good guiding principle! Less is often more.

Successful pack branding appears to be shifting towards understated confidence*. The most enduring food and drink brands use design to build recognisable worlds through colour, typography, language and personality and consider sides, backs and even shelf ready packaging to incorporate supporting messaging that does not make it to the front of the pack.

The challenge for packaging designers now is not whether to include functional or environmental messaging, but how to prevent it from eclipsing the emotional power of the brand itself.

"Food and drink brands, particularly at the premium end, must rely on cues of pleasure, provenance and craft"

Sustainability must be considered



SIMON MORRIS
SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION
MANAGER, ICERTECH

Global issues are putting pressure on buyers, consumers and cost of living. Petrochemical materials have been particularly impacted, and supply chain vulnerabilities exposed.

In the UK the introduction of modulated fees for EPR, DRS and Simpler Recycling mean that packaging material selection is more important than ever.

Consumers expect their packaging to reliably deliver their parcel without damage, whether there is a heatwave or the box has been dropped. They also expect all packaging to be easy to dispose at home, such as through recycling.

Consumers frequently remark about how useful product information is on their outer packaging, even if it is just a simple message like "pop me in the fridge", this shows how powerful custom printed boxes can be.

Innovation is crucial to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to changing trends and legislation. It allows you to introduce new and novel materials that are more sustainable and use more natural materials. Innovation facilitation customisability for your application, and testing and development is recommended to improve your packaging offering.

Sustainability is vital – packaging is a good way to communicate your brand values regarding sustainability to your customers. Reducing environmental impact of your overall delivery reduces your scope 3 emissions. Consumers respond positively to being able to reduce their environmental impact through their purchasing decisions.

"Consumers respond positively to being able to reduce their environmental impact through their purchasing decisions"

Trendwatch.

SPONSORED BY Tracklements



Craving Korean

This tangy trend is nothing new, but its ability to stay the course makes it a winner all-round

Has the UK gone Korea-mad?

In a word, yes. And it's not only Brits that have a case of K-fever – around the world consumers of all ages – but especially younger shoppers – are inspired by Korean food and culture, and this offers a valuable opportunity for retailers.

"The global rise of K-culture from films and K-dramas to music and beauty has played a huge role in the popularity of Korean food," explains Herein No, founder of Miss Kim. "Audiences are constantly seeing what Koreans actually eat on screen. The food looks visually different, bold and exciting, which naturally sparks huge curiosity."

"K-pop, K-dramas, and K-beauty opened the world's eyes to Korean culture, and now K-food is the natural next craving," agrees Judy.

Why has this trend taken hold?

There is a delicious alchemy at the heart of Korean food and drink which makes it both attractive and addictive, particularly for Western palates. We're all familiar with the concept of a 'bliss point' – that careful balance of salt, sweet and fat that makes UPFs so moreish (entirely by design) – and Korean food offers up an entire menu of bliss points for 2026's shopper, totally naturally thanks to its history of fermentation and sweet/tangy bullseye.

"Korean cuisine has always been a hidden gem – layered, soulful, and deeply rooted in balance and fermentation, and now the world is finally catching up," says Judy Joo, founder of Seoul Bird. "There's an intoxicating alchemy in the way Korean food dances between spice, sweetness, smoke, and tang. It's emotional eating, comforting yet thrilling, ancient yet endlessly reinventable."

"There's an intoxicating alchemy in the way Korean food dances between spice, sweetness, smoke, and tang. It's emotional eating, comforting yet thrilling, ancient yet endlessly reinventable"

What can I stock to get involved?

Many of the ingredients that make Korean food so darn delicious are becoming familiar in British kitchens. Gochujang (fermented chilli paste) and kimchi are leading the charge, and well-known staples such as sesame oil and seeds, garlic and ginger – especially when partnered with ganjang (Korean soy sauce) – can offer up the foundational taste of Korea without anyone having to step too far out of their comfort zone.

Those looking to branch out into more speciality products should look out for doenjang (fermented soybean paste) and gochugaro (Korean chilli flakes), both at the heart of the rich and tangy flavour profile we've all fallen in love with.

Dried anchovies provide easy depth to stocks, while kelp and laver seaweeds offer a saline depth with subtle sweetness.

A case for condiments

"Condiments have always played a key part in accessing around-the-world flavours, and Korean cuisine is no exception," says Becca Chapman of Tracklements. "Where Korean-fusion has been in demand, we've seen shoppers using the best tasting condiments they already know and love to create their own versions of Korean-inspired cuisine."

Don't feel you have to recreate the contents of a specialist Asian supermarket in your shelves, though – with experimentation the name of the game and some shoppers nervous about spending out on unknown ingredients, you may already have some Korean pantry staples in stock.

See: sesame, ginger, garlic and seaweed above, plus the all-powerful Sriracha. "We've seen shoppers use condiments they've already got and purchase regularly, like our Sriracha Chilli Sauce, as a substitute for Gochujang (or alongside!) to add heat to their Korean-inspired dishes," explains Becca.

How about drinks?

"There's a lot to be excited about when it comes to Korean spirits," begins Dawn Davies, buying director at The Whisky Exchange. "Traditional Soju is still the most popular alcoholic drink in Korea, usually served with food, and we recently listed 12 Soju options to cater for demand we're seeing in the UK.

"We now have whisky from two Korean distilleries available in store and online, including the first ever single cask Korean whisky to be launched outside of Korea, from a distillery called Ki One. This is an area to watch as I think there's still plenty of growth to come."

The 'K-Wave' is worth **£3.5 BILLION** *to the UK economy. Beauty and fashion accounts for* **42%**, *with food accounting for the remaining* **58%**

Development Economics for Just Eat

Korean food-focused TikTok posts by UK users have risen from **10,000** *in 2023 to over* **17,000** *in 2025*

Bibigo

Searches for 'Korean BBQ' are up more than 60% YOY, with sales of gochujang paste rising more than 70%

Waitrose



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The Joy of a Well-stocked Pantry

A carefully curated store cupboard offering can provide excitement and delight alongside the staples

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TRENDING NOW

KELLY PEAK OF PEAK & THE PANTRY IS SEEING SEVERAL EXCITING THEMES EMERGE

- *Global flavours continue to be hugely influential, particularly cuisines and ingredients that still feel relatively underexplored in mainstream retail. Korean influences, Japanese pantry ingredients and regional Asian like Sichuan region products are all generating strong interest. Consumers are becoming more adventurous and want to recreate travel and restaurant experiences at home*

- *Health is evolving too. It's less about restrictive eating and more about ingredient quality and informed choices. Shoppers are paying far more attention to labels and what's actually inside products, not just sugar or protein content, but the quality of fats and oils being used. We're seeing oils become a major conversation point within pantry products. Consumers increasingly want to know what oil is being used in dressings, conserves, sauces and snacks. There's definitely been a shift towards olive oil and avocado oil, with shoppers actively avoiding lower-quality seed oils in premium products. For many customers now, the oil used is becoming a marker of quality and trust*

Pantry products have become such an integral part of our lives that they can be easily overlooked, forgotten in favour of fresher, more innovative, more loudly marketed categories... but doing so runs the risk of ignoring the undercurrent of excellent taste and the kind of products that can make everyday life just that bit more special.

Premiumisation is at its peak in the store cupboard, where seasonings can hail from exotic destinations most will only experience via their kitchens, baking ingredients can boast quality that impacts both effectiveness and flavour of the end product, and otherwise everyday items can elevate the simplest of dishes into something otherworldly.

"We're continuing to see premiumisation, even during periods of economic pressure," says Kelly Peak of Peak & The Pantry. "Consumers may buy fewer treats overall, but they're willing to spend more on products that genuinely feel special or deliver a memorable experience."

For Laura Roberts of Laura's Larder, "the must-stock pantry items are the products customers build habits around. Really good olive oil, premium crackers, quality pasta sauces, and biscuits that feel like a small upgrade to everyday life. Customers increasingly want products that are versatile, easy to use and capable of making a simple meal feel more exciting."

Offering the classics customers will return to time and again as well as a taste of the unexpected is the way to go when it comes to pantry products, says Laura. "We find customers want a balance of familiarity and discovery. They'll often come in for trusted favourites, but they're also far more open to trying new flavours and ingredients than they were a few years ago. The key is making those products feel approachable."

Considerately curating a range that speaks to the appetites of your customer base is important – as is offering products which differ to those available elsewhere. "Fine food shoppers in 2026 want pantry ranges that feel curated, useful and inspiring rather than simply extensive," explains Kelly. "They're looking for products that elevate everyday cooking, whether that's a beautifully made pasta sauce, a premium olive oil, a globally inspired condiment or a healthier snack with genuinely clean ingredients."

"There's also a growing expectation around authenticity and provenance. Consumers increasingly want to know where products come from, how they're made and why they're worth paying more for."

International appetite

Shoppers are increasingly looking further afield for their fix of culinary discovery, and the pantry offers an easy way for them to tap into trends. "There's definitely a growing appetite for international pantry products and seasonings," explains Laura. "We stock Japanese pantry items alongside other globally inspired sauces and condiments such as those from The Korean Pantry (which isn't that far from us either – win-win).

"What's interesting is the breadth of customers buying them. It's not just younger shoppers or self-confessed foodies. People are looking for flavour without complication, and products like chilli crisp or hot honey instantly add interest to everyday cooking."

An evolving feast

The shoppers 2026 have a sizeable list of expectations they're placing on pantry items, from health credentials to clean labels, convenience to innovation. "Shoppers are balancing indulgence with wellness. Pantry staples now need to deliver on taste and comfort while also fitting modern lifestyles, whether that means higher protein, more fibre, fewer additives or more natural ingredients," explains Kelly.

"We've also seen shoppers become much more educated and selective. They're reading labels carefully, questioning ultra-processed foods and actively seeking products with recognisable ingredients and a clear point of difference. 'Premium' no longer just means beautiful packaging, it means quality, transparency and functionality."

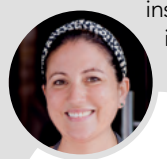
Consumers are also far more ingredient-aware than they were even a few years ago, says Kelly. "We've gone beyond shoppers simply checking calories or sugar levels, now they're looking closely at oils, additives, processing methods



EXPERT VIEW

Laura Roberts, Laura's Larder

"We find pantry items benefit hugely from cross-merchandising, sampling and recommendations. Crackers next to cheese, sauces near deli items, or biscuits paired with teas and coffee all help customers discover products naturally. While some staples do sell themselves, people are still looking for guidance and inspiration from independent retailers."



"People are still looking for guidance and inspiration from independent retailers"



and overall ingredient quality. Another major shift is the blending of convenience and quality. Shoppers still want ease, but they no longer want to compromise on flavour or standards to get it."

Clean label is another major driver, says Kelly. "Shoppers favour shorter ingredient lists, less processing and products that feel more honest and natural. There's a renewed appreciation for simple, high-quality ingredients and traditional methods."

Don't underestimate the power of the pantry

"Ultimately," concludes Laura, "pantry staples are no longer secondary purchases. Increasingly, they're the products shaping how people cook and eat every day, while offering small moments of comfort, discovery and affordable indulgence."



The way shoppers are approaching premium pantry items is changing. "A few years ago, premium pantry shopping was often driven more by novelty or gifting. You'd especially see pantry and antipasti sections treated almost as gifting areas, products people bought occasionally, for entertaining or as a treat," says Kelly.

"Now, those categories have become part of everyday shopping habits. Consumers are cooking at home more intentionally and want restaurant-quality experiences from their own kitchens, so premium pantry products are being used far more regularly rather than just bought for occasions."



CASE STUDY: PREMIUM FLOUR

FLOUR IS NO LONGER JUST AN INGREDIENT – IT'S BECOMING PART OF THE CONSUMER'S VALUES, LIFESTYLE, AND FOOD STORY, SAYS BERTIE MATTHEWS OF MATTHEWS COTSWOLD FLOUR

Fine food retailers are perfectly positioned to turn flour from a functional product into a destination category.

People are becoming far more aware that flour is not all the same. The wheat, the farming methods, the milling process, and the provenance behind the bag all influence flavour, performance, and quality. Consumers increasingly want products that not only bake well, but also support the land and people behind them.

Flour also naturally drives wider premium food purchasing. Customers buying speciality flour are often highly engaged food shoppers who are also interested in artisan bakery products, pasta, oils, preserves, and home baking ingredients.

For independents especially, offering an exciting flour range creates differentiation, theatre, and loyalty within the pantry category.

"Great flour doesn't just fill shelf space – it creates conversation, loyalty, and a reason for customers to come back"



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Infinity Foods Organic Super Muesli
A blend of oats, seeds, fruit and crunchy extras. High in fibre and full of texture.
infinityfoodswholesale.coop



Better With Almonds Oriental Spices
Regeneratively grown almonds in a sweet and spicy all-natural coating with a hint of the Orient.
betterwithalmonds.com



Emilia's Pasta Casarecce
A short, twisted pasta shape with its origins in Sicily, meticulously crafted through extrusion using bronze dyes.
emiliaspasta.com



La Drogheria Italian Herbs Grinder
Bring the flavour of Italy to a huge number of dishes with this blend including rosemary, sage, bay, basil, marjoram and thyme.
drogheria.com



Familigia Crispino Sugo Alla 'Nduja Di Spilinga
This all-natural sauce is rich with tomatoes, spicy 'nduja, extra virgin olive oil and sauteed onion.
familigiacrispino.shop



Ossa Organic Organic Chicken Bone Broth
Slow-cooked chicken bone broth, crafted with organic vegetables and 46% bones.
ossaorganic.com



Fish 4 Ever Anchovy Fillets
Cantabrian anchovies salted for six months in Trapani sea salt and finished with local organic olive oil.
fish4ever.co.uk



Sabor de Amor Salsa Brava
A classic Spanish tomato sauce with a hot chilli kick. Works with tapas or as a hot sauce for dipping.
sabordeamor.com



Flavour Bombs Coconut Curry
Designed to create a deep, creamy, and flavourful curry without the need for chopping or measuring ingredients
flavourbombs.com



Woolf's Kitchen Lemongrass & Ginger Spice Paste
A versatile cooking paste and condiment with a hot, zingy kick from chillies and tamarind.
thewoolfskitchen.com

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Store Cupboard Must-stocks

Pasta and cooking sauces are such staples of the modern British diet that it can be easy to overlook their potential for fine food retailers... Here's why you should give them a second look

Enter any supermarket, of any size, and the amount of shelf space allocated to pasta, rice and cooking sauces will be pretty hefty – so it's no wonder, really, that many consumers consider these products to be somewhat of a commodity. After all, if you're going to be eating them multiple times a week and their main role in your menu is convenience, why look further?

The good news for *Speciality Food* readers is that there are plenty of brands out there inspiring shoppers to seek out better – and offering product ranges that perfectly align with fine food philosophies... But, as ever, it's vitally important to communicate and justify the price difference between the artisanal, carefully crafted options on your shelves and the commoditised versions so easily accessible at the multiples.

"Consumers want immediate clarity on the value of the dried pasta they select in-store; they need to understand why it's premium and trust they can taste the difference vs. a cheaper alternative," agrees Winette Winston, president and managing director of Seggiano.

"We're seeing heritage and ingredient sourcing as value-drivers in addition to quality," she continues, plus "more and more, regenerative farming specifically is driving interest for ingredient sourcing. We work with small, specialist producers across Italy and build long-term relationships that prioritise quality, traceability, and responsible farming and production practices. In practical terms, that means ingredients with integrity (often organic where it makes sense for the product and region), careful provenance, and simple recipes that avoid unnecessary additives and over-processing."

Variety boosts sales

Suma have stocked pasta and rice since the business started in the 1970s. "They have, and always will be, a staple part of kitchen cupboards everywhere, and they form the base of many popular dishes," begins Rebecca Kinnard from Suma. "Rice and pasta are just super accessible to almost all diets too, especially now we have so many excellent gluten-free and whole wheat options. They have a long shelf life and can take pretty much any additions you can throw at them! So, it's fair to say we spend a lot of time making sure our range offers quality and variety."

Spaghetti, penne and fusilli are popular for a reason, but offer a variety of pasta shapes and sizes to inspire customers to branch out. "Variety is key to unlocking new use cases for pasta in consumers' meal planning and lives, especially since it's such a versatile food," she continues.

"We have three distinct lines of pastas to meet consumers where they're at: traditional organic pastas from Tuscany – the classic for dinners in and date nights; ancient grains organic pastas from Sicily – high fibre and protein makes it ideal for to-go lunches meal prepped (even more nutritional balance consumers are looking for); and gluten-free organic pastas from Piemonte and Veneto – an inclusive option for those with intolerances."

Suma also offers a comprehensive range, and 17 of these are own-brand Suma pastas. "The Suma paper packaged pastas hold a special place in our hearts ever since we visited the factory in Italy where they are made, which is also a fellow co-operative, of farmers. Not only are the pastas all organic, artisan-made using renewable energy in the hills of the Marche region, they are also paper packaged making them more

Sauces that sing

Cooking sauces have historically been an undersung category, with convenience often trumping quality meaning that keen foodies have chosen to cook sauces from scratch at home, but that's changing with the advent of premium cooking sauces with provenance, quality and genuine credentials.

"The trend remains centred on authenticity and regionality of different cuisines," explains Shezad Aslam, managing director of Aagrah Foods. "The Indian category has generally been quite generic in its offering but consumers are becoming far better travelled and more discerning in provenance and quality. Pair that with growing social media content and recipes that are at people's fingertips, and you discover an appetite to adventure to regions across any cuisine on any given night. Cooking sauces need to cater to the Big Night In moment too, creating restaurant quality meals in the comfort of people's own homes."

The appetite for story and proven provenance is strong across cuisines: "We have seen an appetite for more regional recipes and dishes made with quality ingredients with provenance," says Shezad. "Dare we say, the days of a Tikka Masala are slowly fading as different regional flavours are taking centre stage. Conversely, where consumers would pick up a generic Tikka Masala, they are now more discerning on the provenance, picking up brands such as ours that add the additional layers to the flavour."

At-home cooking, without compromise

"We're finding people are looking for authenticity with their meals, so being able to use genuine recipes from Italy, for example, makes

£ HOW TO SELL

- ***Consider the USP***
  Shoppers want to know why you're asking them to spend more than they usually would on these products, so shout about the foodie credentials of your range
- ***Branch out***
  Look beyond the products easily available elsewhere to inspire shoppers to return to your store for these staples; offer them the opportunity to explore the category
- ***Up the convenience***
  Do your cooking ingredients usually sit according to type? Consider locating them according to their cuisine – for example, pasta next to pestos; basmati rice next to Indian sauces and snacks – to make purchasing decisions quicker and simpler for customers





EXPERT VIEW

Sally Assinder, Garofalo

"Consumers continue to move beyond the basics of spaghetti and penne to explore regional specialities such as Mafalda Corta, Paccheri, and Orecchiette, and are actively seeking authentic DOP ingredients. At the same time, there is growing interest in healthier pasta options such as wholewheat and high-protein varieties."



"A balance of health and indulgence is driving real innovation in the category"

a real difference," says Rebecca. "People travel more than ever now too, so they're experiencing more cultural flavours and cuisines and then looking to replicate them at home. As people tend to be cooking at home over eating out at the moment, they want something that feels premium. Using top quality ingredients does help give that extra touch to a meal, making it feel special even if it has been rustled up at the last minute."



"There's growing awareness around the difference that ingredients and production methods make to the final dish," says Becky Gill, national account manager at Emilia's Crafted Pasta. "Consumers are looking for dried pasta with better texture, improved sauce absorption and a more premium eating experience overall. We place a strong emphasis on quality ingredients and traditional production techniques because we believe those details make a meaningful difference to the final eating experience."

That doesn't mean that shoppers are willing to sacrifice the thing that makes pasta, rice and cooking sauces so approachable: convenience. "At the same time," she says, "shoppers want products that fit modern lifestyles – quick to prepare, dependable and suitable for everything from midweek meals to more elevated home dining occasions. Value is still important, but consumers are increasingly willing to trade up for products that feel genuinely superior in quality and taste."

The future of pasta and sauces is looking as rich as a slow-cooked ragu. "Looking ahead, we expect continued growth in premium dried pasta, particularly products that combine convenience with craftsmanship. Sustainability will also remain a major focus, especially around sourcing, packaging and transparency throughout the supply chain.

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Sauce Shop
Smoky Southwest Simmer Sauce
Made in small batches using only natural ingredients, including smoked chipotle peppers.
sauceshop.co



Isle of Wight Tomatoes
Shakshuka Tomato Sauce
Made using sweet Isle of Wight tomatoes, this smoky North African sauce makes the perfect brunch dish.
iowtomatoes.co.uk



Garofalo
High Protein Mezze Maniche Rigate
With extra protein and fibre, this offers a wholesome upgrade to this traditional shape.
pasta-garofalo.com



Gli Aironi
Risotto – Funghi Porcini
A flavoursome, rich, earthy risotto. Cook and stir, and it's ready in just 15 minutes.
justgourmetfoods.co.uk





Keeping Life Sweet

In troubled times, little soothes the British public more than a bake. Here's how to make this temptation work for you

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A BEAUTIFUL MESS



CATHERINE CONNOR
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FELIX STENHOUSE
OUTPOST BAKERY

The fact that shoppers seek out sweet treats as a mood-boosting treat is nothing new, and while the current health-conscious shopper is actively looking after their waistlines as well as their wallets, that's not to say that sugary indulgences are totally off the table.

"Britain still wants sweetness in 2026," begins Leanne Crowther of A Glorious Mess. "Consumers are craving treats and desserts that feel special — For Flower and White, this means a Thursday afternoon pick-me-up, a desk drawer sweet hit, or a 'just because' moment. Customers don't want to be limited. It's indulgence with a modern mindset."

The business has conducted research into the topic, and found that consumers are looking for a delicious combination of elevated comfort, nostalgia with a hint of newness, texture and theatre, recognisable ingredients and crafted products plus convenience – "they want treats that earn their place in their lives and families," says Leanne.

Delicious education

Convenience paired with artisanal, real ingredient credentials is a heady mix, says Catherine Connor of Lovingly Artisan. "If you travel back only five years ago people would come into a shop looking for a loaf, whereas now often the first thing they ask when they walk into a bakery is 'do you have sourdough?" she says.

Her belief is that the role of those working within the artisan industry centres around education. "It's about sharing the options available and advising on how they can fit into that customer's lifestyle." Some customers are looking for a versatile bake that will take them from breakfast through to brunch, lunch and dinner, while others are looking for single occasion showstoppers. "Some are health conscious but nervous about additions like seeds because they have young children; we ask about their specific requirements and prescribe a suitable loaf to them, and our conversation, inspiration and reassurance are why they shop with businesses like ours."

Consider your USP

Offering a notably different range to that provided by the multiples – and your local competition – is important to attract and retain a discerning customer base. For Felix Stenhouse, co-founder of Outpost Bakery, providing a unique taste of the region has proven to be invaluable. "We source some of our flour from a farmer nine miles away who is regeneratively growing grains and milling them himself, which results in a course flour which is quite difficult to bake with but a real selling point for some customers – plus we're supporting a small-scale local business, which we're passionate about doing."

The bakery also produces viennoiserie which is levelled up with ingredients foraged from the local area such as woodruff, meadowsweet and sweet cicely. "People are surprised and delighted by our use of these ingredients from nearby fields and hedgerows, and are willing to spend more with us because they know our bakes are going to be really, really good and they won't get anything similar elsewhere."

Making bakery work for retail

At Suffolk Food Hall, the in-house bakery sits at the heart of the site and the team's work. "It reflects our wider commitment to fresh, locally made food and gives customers something that's crafted fresh on-site every single day," explains Bex Neale, marketing manager. "For many visitors, the bakery is one of the first stops when they arrive, and the aroma of fresh bread and pastries immediately creates a sense of warmth (and hunger!)."

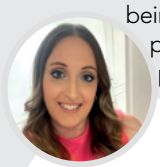
The experience offered by the on-site bakery has been carefully considered by the team. "We've worked hard to make the bakery more than simply a place to buy bread. Customers can see the baking process happening throughout the day, which creates a real sense of authenticity. From trays of pastries coming out of the ovens to bakers shaping dough by hand, there's always something happening visually and smelling delicious. The open, welcoming layout encourages customers to slow down, browse, ask questions and engage with the team. Our bakers know our regulars well and are always happy to have a chat, adding to our bakery experience. We also ensure we adapt our products to seasonality and special occasions so there is often something new to try!"

> *People are willing to spend more with us because they know our bakes are going to be really, really good and they won't get anything similar elsewhere*

EXPERT VIEW

Bex Neale, Suffolk Food Hall

We see daily shoppers picking up fresh bread, families treating themselves during a visit, commuters grabbing breakfast pastries and coffee, and destination visitors who come specifically for the experience and quality. There's also a strong appeal among customers who care about provenance, freshness and supporting local businesses. Increasingly, people are looking for food that is healthier, has less additives and low food miles which is exactly what we're all about here due to our ingredients being local and producing products fresh on-site.



"The bakery attracts a very broad customer base, which is one of its strengths"

SPECIALITY FOOD Stock Check 26



The Exploding Bakery Raspberry & White Chocolate Frangipane Cake
This bake is gooey and spongy, filled with melted white chocolate, almond cream and real raspberries.
explodingbakery.com



The Bay Tree Fruity Flapjack
This is a real teatime favourite that works a treat at all times of year. It's sweet and chewy, filled with sultanas and glace cherries.
thebaytree.co.uk

Pantry Staples.

Impress your customers with this inspiring array of modern store cupboard must-haves

Aagrah Foods
Karahi Tarka Paste

Originating from central Peshawar, this mild-to-medium cooking sauce will help you create a delicious and authentic Karahi curry in minutes. Just add the delicious blend of Aagrah's signature spices, tomatoes, garlic, green chilli and caramelised ginger to any meat, poultry, fish or veg for a true taste adventure of your own! Best served with naan or chappati breads.
aagrahfoods.com





Matthews
Regenerative All-Purpose White Flour

Made with regeneratively farmed grain from local British farms, Matthews Cotswold Flour's Regenerative All-Purpose White Flour is a UK first. With a fine consistency and rich flavour, it's a versatile ingredient, brilliant for making breads, brioche, pastry, cakes, shortbreads, sauces and many other savoury or sweet treats.
cotswoldflour.com

Zaytoun
Maftoul

Maftoul (often referred to as giant couscous) is bulgar grains hand-rolled in whole wheat flour. This Palestinian staple has a firm texture and nutty flavour which makes it a delicious alternative to other grains. Great in soups, stews and risottos as well as a hearty addition to salads. Brought to you by Zaytoun, established in 2004 to support the resilience of Palestinian communities through fair trade.
zaytoun.uk





LittlePod
Natural Vanilla Paste

Champions of real vanilla sourced responsibly, LittlePod craft fine quality products that soon become staples in both domestic and professional kitchens. LittlePod's Natural Vanilla Paste is a specially formulated and flavour-packed blend of vanilla pods, seeds and extracts that is ideal for use in sweet and savoury dishes. Versatile and rich in both flavour and viscosity, a little goes a long way – just one teaspoon is equivalent to one vanilla pod.
littlepod.co.uk

Fudge Kitchen
Strawberries & Cream Fudge

Six handcrafted pieces of Strawberries & Cream fudge, beautifully presented in sustainable packaging designed for standout seasonal display. Made with locally sourced cream, rich butter and juicy strawberries, this traditional recipe delivers a smooth, indulgent texture and a familiar nostalgic flavour profile. A distinctive new seasonal addition for independent, speciality retailers seeking something both classic and eye-catching, with strong gifting potential an stands out from the rest.
fudgekitchen.co.uk





Butlers Grove
Red Onion Chutney

Bring rich flavour to your range with Butler's Grove Red Onion Chutney – a deliciously sweet and tangy accompaniment perfect for cheese, meats and sandwiches. Available as part of a versatile range of over 30 products, all offered for own-label opportunities. With low minimum order quantities, Butler's Grove makes it easy to create a premium food range tailored to your brand.
butlersgrove.co.uk

The Cotswold Cardillo
Pasta Sauces

The Cotswold Cardillo pasta sauce range features four award-winning sauces made with ingredients sourced from Italy and the Cotswolds. Artisan jars with bright labels and clear cooking instructions. Highlights include Puttanesca with Taggiasche olives (2-star Great Taste Award), Bolognese with Cotswold beef (won silver at the 2025 Farm Shop & Deli Show Awards), Amatriciana with Italian cured pork cheek and a slow-cooked Tomato sauce delivering clean, authentic flavours.
thecotswoldcardillo.co.uk





Zaytoun
Medjoul Dates

Nothing compares to the rich caramel succulence of Medjoul dates – a delicious healthy kitchen cupboard standby to satisfy sweet cravings, whether straight from the pack or in favourite bakes. Harvested on Palestinian farms around Jericho in the West Bank and brought to you by Zaytoun, established in 2004 to support the resilience of Palestinian communities through fair trade. 250g & 500g.
zaytoun.uk



Preserving the Best

With some clever curation, your preserves range can satisfy every type of customer – from those seeking excitement from around the world to the ones after a comforting taste of tradition

Preserves, both sweet and savoury, have been a vital part of the British store cupboard for generations – if not centuries – and while consumer palates are evolving, the sector is innovative right alongside. Some will often seek out a joyful taste of their childhoods, whatever their age (think blackberry picking with your grandmother and the resulting bramble jelly), while others have an appetite for something they haven't tried before (likely involving at least a hint of zing or spice). Whatever you opt for in your range, think dimension, story and versatility. After all, a carefully made preserve is worth so much more than simply slathering on toast; many can add complexity to both sweet and savoury dishes too, so think of them as flavour-boosting ingredients as well as delicious finishers.



PROVENANCE

PROVENANCE IS A POWERFUL SELLING TOOL IN THE FINE FOOD WORLD, AND THESE PRODUCTS OFFER IT UP WITH RELISH.

Fruteto, *Sicilian Orange Spread*

"Provenance is crucial for artisanal preserves because the quality and character of the fruit define the final taste. The variety, growing region, climate and ripeness at harvest all shape the balance of sweetness and acidity, as well as the aroma," explains Rebecca Ravera, founder and owner of Fruteto. "By selecting single-origin whole fruit, we create fruit spreads with real character, from the delicate perfume of Romagna apricots to the natural sweetness of Campanian strawberries and the bright citrus intensity of Sicilian oranges, without needing to use refined sugar. Provenance gives artisanal brands a meaningful point of difference from large-scale brands, where fruit is often blended from multiple origins for consistency and cost efficiency."
frutetoitalia.com



MODERN CLASSICS

SOMETIMES ONLY THE FINEST ITERATION OF A TRADITIONAL FAN FAVOURITE WILL DO. THESE PRODUCTS TICK THE NOSTALGIA BOX WITH APLOMB.

The Bay Tree, *Amazing Apricot Jam*

"There is so much more to The Bay Tree Amazing Apricot Jam than sealing a cake before icing. It may be the glue that holds your Battenberg together, but with a little imagination, it can be one of the most versatile jams in the cupboard," says Richard Heddington, marketing executive at The Bay Tree. "From toppings for toast or croissants, fillings for jam tarts, adding a fruity twist to curries, and glazing chicken or duck, this is a true gem for all manner of sweet and savoury recipes. Apricot Jam is often overlooked in favour of the berry flavours, but is one of the most versatile jams for countless sweet and savoury uses."
thebaytree.co.uk



BOTANICALS

FLORAL NOTES HAVE LONG BEEN A HIT IN THE DRINKS CATEGORY, BUT FORWARD-THINKING BUYERS ARE BRINGING THEM ONTO THEIR PRESERVES SHELVES TOO.

Hawkshead Relish, *Strawberry & Lavender Jam*

"Botanicals are trending across the food and drink industry right now and are particularly popular when summer rolls around," begins Bronnie Visser, sales and marketing executive at Hawkshead Relish. "This jam offers a simple way to incorporate one of Britain's most loved floral herbs into customers' kitchens, and is a delicate balance of ripe strawberries, subtle floral notes of lavender and a little black pepper for an extra aromatic twist. We love to add a touch of elegance to an afternoon tea or pastries with this jam, but it's equally delicious spread over warm toast!"
hawksheadrelish.com



Number Eighteen Suffolk
Wildflower Runny Honey
Offering a unique taste of the Suffolk countryside at the height of summer, the bees that made this honey fed on a wide variety of flowers and blossoms.
numbereighteensuffolk.com



Essence Foods
Lime Marmalade with Bergamot & Bay
For lovers of sharp lime marmalade, this award-winning preserve is fresh, zesty and perfect any time of the year.
essencefoods.co.uk



London Honey Co
Kent Beach Honey
From the coastal forage of Kent, where the bees visit the bramble, viper's bugloss and wild wood sage flowers which grow on the vast flint beaches, producing an unusual honey with notes of verdant herbs.
thelondonhoneycompany.com



Eastgate Larder
Medlar Jelly
Hailing from North Norfolk, this is a fragrant and versatile preserve with a distinct citrus note and a celebration of the historically popular medlar fruit.
eastgatelarder.co.uk



England Preserves
Blackcurrant Blighty
Embracing and emphasising the sour character of blackcurrants, this is a delicious, sweet and sour jam that makes you salivate for more.
englandpreserves.co.uk



Cottage Delight
Classic Breakfast Marmalade
Rich and deep with plenty of character, this is the traditional choice for breakfast. Small batch-made the traditional way in open copper pans.
cottagedelight.co.uk

FRUITY & SPICY

ENLIVEN YOUR SHELVES – AND CUSTOMERS' CUPBOARDS – WITH THE 'FRICY' COMBO SHOPPERS CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF

Tracklements, *Pineapple & Chilli Relish*

"One of our best-selling special editions ever, Pineapple & Chilli Relish not only delights shoppers looking for their next 'fricy' fix, it's also satisfying the demand around-the-world flavours," says Becca Chapman, trade marketing, category and insights lead at Tracklements. "It pairs perfectly with grilled pork or chicken, and my personal favourite is a dollop on a sourdough pizza for a top-tier twist on the ever-controversial Hawaiian pizza."
tracklements.co.uk

PANTRY HERO

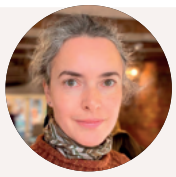




Radnor Preserves Blood Orange, Chilli & Sea Salt Marmalade
Use as a marinade for roasts or sausages, add to a cheese board, or simply serve on hot buttered toasted sourdough.
radnorpreserves.com



Butter Bike Smoked Chilli Peanut Butter
A wonderfully complex concoction of fiery chipotle chillies and smoky paprika which gives this creamy, crunchy peanut butter a serious savoury kick.
butterbike.co.uk



THE TRUTH **ABOUT HONEY**

HELEN ROGERS, CO-FOUNDER OF THE HONEY GUILD, TALKS US THROUGH WHY HONEY DESERVES A FRESH APPROACH

Most people are surprised to learn that not all honey is created equal. The jars filling supermarket shelves are often blended from honeys sourced across multiple countries, ultra-filtered to remove pollen, and in some cases heat-treated to the point where much of the natural complexity is lost. Real honey — genuinely raw, single-origin or mono-floral — retains its pollen fingerprint, its natural enzymes, and the nuanced flavour profile that reflects exactly where and when it was made. Consumers deserve to know the difference, and right now, the labelling simply doesn't make it easy for them.

Consumers should understand just how wide the world of honey really is — from water-white through to dark amber, with a corresponding range in texture, aroma and flavour that rivals wine in its complexity. Honey isn't a single product. It never was.

Honey is one of the most adulterated foods in the world — it's a well-documented global issue. When cheaper, heavily processed honey dominates the shelf, it undercuts the beekeepers who are doing things properly: managing healthy colonies, harvesting carefully, and protecting the biodiversity that pollinators depend on. Education isn't just about taste — it's about supporting a sustainable, transparent supply chain and helping consumers spend their money where it genuinely makes a difference.

Speciality retailers are perfectly placed to be the trusted voice here. Stock honey that is clearly traceable — ideally British, single-origin, or certified — and be confident talking about it. Share the story with their customers. Honey bought from a deli where the team can explain the provenance is a fundamentally different product to something pulled from a supermarket shelf — and customers know that, even if they don't yet have the language for it.

INTERNATIONAL

BRITISH SHOPPERS ARE HUNGRIER THAN EVER FOR PRESERVES THAT EXCITE THEIR PALATES AND OFFER A TASTE OF REALMS BEYOND OUR OWN BORDERS.

Seggiano, *Fig Jam*

"This is pure and simple, made solely from Dottato figs 99.4%, lemon juice, and lemon zest," says Winette Winston, president and managing director of Seggiano. "We use lusciously sweet Dottato figs that are famously grown in Calabria, the heel of Italy. This deliciously sweet spread is ideal with breakfast and compliments both soft and hard cheeses."
seggiano.com

PANTRY HERO





822 Achar
Bright, crunchy and sweet-sour, this Indonesian-style achar pickle brings sharp lift and warm spice to sandwiches, bowls and grilled food.
eat822.com



ButterNut Coconut Cardamom Cashew Butter
A rich and creamy blend of cashews with coconut and the heady, citrus-bright fragrance of cardamom.
butter-nut.com







The Great British Biscuit

Sweet and savoury biscuits are proving themselves to be indispensible in the fine food sector thanks to their canny combination of flavour, versatility and story

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SIDDHI MEHTA
RHYTHM 108



ANDY MURRAY
THE DRINKS BAKERY



HOLLY WARREN
FORTNUM & MASON

They may be easily accessible in all forms of retail across the UK, but biscuits are undoubtedly worth a second look when it comes to fine food retail, with brands and consumers alike actively working within the realms of quality, sustainability and story more than ever before.

Consumers are looking for much more than a mindless snack, though, instead the key to sales success lies in offering a 'moment', something special which inspires them to put the kettle on, gather with loved ones and relax into the perfect crunch.

"Shoppers are increasingly looking for biscuits that feel like a treat rather than an everyday staple, with a shift towards products that offer something special – whether through eye-catching design, artisan craftsmanship or a strong heritage story," agrees Charlotte Smith, marketing assistant at Image On Food.

At Thetford Garden Centre, marketing and events manager Emily Moss has found that indulgence really does sell. "Our customers are looking for biscuits that feel like a treat. Quality really matters; they want something that stands out from supermarket options," she says. "There's a strong pull towards handcrafted, bakery-style biscuits with a homemade look and feel, recognisable ingredients and traditional recipes, and products with personality, whether that's through branding, nostalgia, or novelty shapes.

"In a garden centre setting, biscuits are often bought alongside other food items or as part of a leisure visit, so they need to feel special enough to justify that treat purchase."

"Most of us have been feeling the pinch financially in recent years, and just as things looked like they would be improving, the global economy is under threat again thanks to the war in the Middle East endangering the ease of movement of fuel, having a knock-on effect on the price of almost everything we buy," says Dawn Reade, director of Island Bakery. "So it may be a while before consumers have the confidence to invest in larger purchases again. Granted, many people will also be economising on their regular grocery choices. However, a small splurge on an item like a packet of biscuits, a bar of chocolate, or a portion of really good artisan cheese can go a long way to helping us enjoy a small pleasure now and again without breaking the bank completely."

Making an occasion of biscuits

While we're all guilty of snaffling a couple of biscuits too many on a solo night in front ot the television, biscuits inspire connections between people – sharing a pack, whether in person or via gifting is increasingly popular. And for a product to be worthy of gifting, quality is key.

Today's shoppers are "discerning and are looking for something that is a genuine indulgence during a short, but special, moment in their day, whether that be with a cup of coffee in between busy jobs, or being sociable with friends or family," says Dawn. "Hopefully they want to savour the superior taste of just one or two really good biscuits, rather than a handful of cheap and cheerful, but forgettable, ones."

"Gifting and sharing continue to drive the category, with seasonal and character-led products creating occasion and encouraging impulse purchases," explains Charlotte. "At the same time, consumers are placing greater emphasis on quality ingredients, seeking out products that deliver on flavour, authenticity and indulgence.

"Provenance is also key, with shoppers drawn to brands that offer a compelling story alongside great taste. Versatility is increasingly important too, with biscuits enjoyed not just on their own, but as part of entertaining, desserts and drinks pairings."

A heady combination of

EXPERT VIEW

Laura Roberts, Laura's Larder

Biscuits remain a really strong category because they sit across gifting, self-treating and impulse purchasing. Customers still love nostalgia, but increasingly they want elevated versions of familiar classics. Brands like Island Bakery, Franks, and Coffee Dunkers perform well because they combine quality with comfort and familiarity.



"Customers still love nostalgia, but increasingly they want elevated versions of familiar classics"



6%

There has been a 6% year-on-year rise in on-the-go missions within healthier biscuits

KANTAR

provenance and innovation has proved successful at Stag Bakeries. "We have been making biscuits on the Isle of Lewis since 1885, and everything we do is rooted in that heritage," says Daniel Smith, sales and marketing manager at Stag Bakeries. "Our Stornoway Water Biscuits are made to a recipe passed down the generations and remain our best-selling product, proof that consumers will keep coming back to simple products that are done well."

The team haven't rested on their laurels, though, instead they have responded to the consumer appetite for new options which tick 2026's boxes. "The seaweed biscuit range continues to do well for us and is a good example of how we approach innovation, by finding ways to tie our location with interesting ingredients connected to the region," he continues. "We've also explored different textures and adding colour to our range by working with ingredients like beetroot and charcoal for example.

A taste for adventure

A hunger for provenance and story powers sales of quality biscuits. "Today's shoppers are more informed and more adventurous than ever before," says Daniel. "When it comes to biscuits for cheese, provenance and quality of ingredients have become increasingly important considerations, with consumers wanting to know where their food comes from and how it has been made. There is also a growing appetite for products that tell a story, whether that's a regional heritage, a unique ingredient or an artisan production method."

Versatility sells

"Versatility matters," he continues. "Shoppers are building more personalised cheeseboards and entertaining at home more than ever, so they are looking for biscuits that can do more than one job, pairing equally well with cheese, charcuterie, smoked fish or dips. It's a balance between flavour innovation and authenticity."





RETAIL **INSIGHT**

EMILY MOSS, MARKETING AND EVENTS MANAGER AT THETFORD GARDEN CENTRE, ON THE RISE OF BISCUIT 'OCCASIONS'

Customers are opting for smaller quantities of higher-quality products. Biscuits have become a 'treat' category rather than a routine purchase. They also want reassurance, natural ingredients, fewer additives – but they're still willing to indulge.

As a destination retailer, we see customers browsing and discovering rather than shopping with a fixed list. Sampling, storytelling, and attractive displays influence purchasing more than ever.

In our experience, biscuits are enjoyed across a variety of moments throughout the day, and the type customers choose does tend to change depending on the occasion. The classic setting is still at home in the evening on the sofa with a cup of tea where customers gravitate towards comforting, slightly more indulgent options like shortbread, chocolate biscuits, or something like a Viennese whirl that feels like a proper treat.

For daytime moments, such as a mid-morning or afternoon break, they often choose something lighter or more convenient, particularly if they're at work, so smaller biscuits or individually portioned options come into play.

When it comes to social occasions having friends over or putting together an informal spread customers are more likely to trade up to premium assortments or even savoury biscuits for cheese boards, where presentation and variety matter more.

We also see a strong "in-the-moment" purchase during the garden centre visit itself, where customers pick up a biscuit to enjoy with a coffee, typically favouring something soft, indulgent, or visually appealing.

For families, especially with children, novelty biscuits like character-style gingerbread are popular because they add a sense of fun and sharing.

Overall, the occasion really shapes the choice, but across all of them, biscuits are very much tied to small moments of enjoyment and treat-led behaviour rather than everyday necessity.





HOLLY WARREN, BISCUIT BUYER AT FORTNUM & MASON, ON THE MODERN BISCUIT OCCASION AND CREATING A SPECTACLE OUT OF BISCUITS

We identified an opportunity to create something completely new and unrivalled.

We knew there was demand and people loved our biscuits, so we challenged ourselves to think big – if we set ourselves the challenge to create the best biscuit shop in the world, what would that look like? What would we develop to go in there?

We wanted to create a product proposition that shows that a biscuit can be so much more – it's an amazing base format for creativity, playfulness, and above all, deliciousness. And we knew that meant a plethora of choice, which can sometimes be overwhelming, so we wanted to pair that with an experience that helps customers discover and choose the perfect biscuit for them.

I think shoppers right now, particularly in the luxury sphere, are looking for two quite distinct things: a memorable experience, and the reassurance that they're making good choices.

To address the former, we let our imagination run wild – for example in the creation of the Whoppalossus, a single biscuit which at 400g weighs about the same as a loaf of bread! Or our biscuit replica of Fortnum's – an enormous dollhouse-like structure made of iced biscuits that stands at the Biscuitorium entrance.

But we knew we had to underpin that creativity with a constant focus on quality and sustainability. That meant everything from visiting farms that produce key ingredients such as flour and butter, to re-engineering tin shapes so that they keep the biscuits fresher for longer once opened – we reviewed all of our existing ranges as well as asking these questions as we developed the new ones.

In terms of how and when people eat biscuits, I think the rules are out the window.

Even here at Fortnum's, where we love a good tradition (you'll notice images of our clock hands often pointed to 4 o'clock – time for tea!), we've accepted that a biscuit or five are as likely to be eaten late at night as they are mid-afternoon. We've even leaned into it with our new range of biscuits to pair with alcoholic drinks – you'd be surprised how well the right biscuit can go with a gin & tonic or a beer.



The considered choice

"The rise of UPFs is bringing a greater focus on natural quality ingredients in their food. This is being compounded by the continued increase in the cost of living, driving in-home dining occasions like cheese/sharing boards," says Jack Elkins, senior brand manager at Peters Yard.

The way consumers view savoury biscuits is changing, says Jack. "From the ingredients to our sourdough starter and all the way through to our processes we're looking for ways that we can enhance the cheese and cracker eating experience. For so long crackers have been seen as an edible plate, but actually there's so much a cracker adds to the bite, through contrasting flavours and textures," he says. "To any retailers I would always say check the ingredients before putting something on your shelf."

As well as keeping a hungry eye out for better-for-you options, Jack has found that shoppers are willing to pay more for quality options. "As shoppers are eating out less, we're seeing them trade-up through spending more on food," he says.



The mindful pound

2026's shopper is as mindful of their health as they are of their budgets and sense of value, and are "looking to indulge without compromise," says Siddhi Mehta, founder and CEO of Rhythm 108. "Mindful snacking is now a global behaviour. Mondelez's 2025 State of Snacking report found 91% of consumers engage in it, and customers expect great taste that also meets their ethical, sustainable and health values. They're now genuinely educated about what's in the products they buy, looking for short ingredient lists with ingredients they actually understand.

"The wider health and wellness trend is reshaping every category, and the biscuit category is no exception: Mintel found 58% of UK households are now buying into healthier snacking, and Kantar tracked a 6% year-on-year rise in on-the-go missions within healthier biscuits."

Health doesn't have to mean lacking in indulgence, as the success of Rhythm 108 proves. "We're seeing a clear surge in oat-based biscuits specifically: oats are naturally gluten-free, nutrient-dense, and tick the functional-food box today's shoppers want," says Siddhi.

"It's a shift we're seeing directly: our oat-based biscuits are among our fastest-growing lines, and it's no accident. When ingredients that bring their own indulgence credentials are handled by Swiss chocolatiers the free-from for shoppers doesn't need to choose between flavour and credentials."

91%
of consumers engage in mindful snacking
MONDELEZ'S 2025 STATE OF SNACKING REPORT

From a retail perspective, Natalie Miller, managing director at Rhythm 108, says, "We're seeing more buyers placing confectionery products that also offer health benefits such as gluten-free, organic and palm-oil free into front-of-store, meal deal, and convenience locations. There's a building appetite

EXPERT VIEW

Andy Murray, founder of The Drinks Bakery



As a result of growing up in a foodie family I've long been familiar with the idea of pairing food and drink, but there was a distinct lack of innovation in this regard in the snacking industry. It all came down to crisps and nuts, for decades, so I decided to launch The Drinks Bakery to position a range of savoury shortbread biscuits as the ultimate pairing for all manner of drinks.

"We flavour profile biscuits to pair with drinks, because quality drinks deserve to be elevated"

Flavourful drinks deserve and need snacks with a kick to level up to them; you need products that can stand up to different acidity levels as well as offer plenty of umami to be on a par with drinks that have been distilled, fermented, brewed or cask-aged.

The mission is that our biscuits enhance the drinks you serve them with, and vice versa – together, combined, they provide an elevated experience.







from shoppers to make more conscious decisions when it comes to snacking."

"That space, where free-from meets genuine indulgence, is where the next wave of growth in this category will be earned," says Siddhi.

A bright future for quality biscuits

"The sector continues to move towards premium, experience-led products, with shoppers treating biscuits as an affordable indulgence and seeking out quality and differentiation," says Charlotte.

Seasonality can offer sales boosts throughout the year. "There is also growing crossover into wider food occasions, particularly entertaining, with biscuits enjoyed alongside desserts, drinks and cheeseboards, as well as being used in gifting formats such as Christmas Eve boxes and Easter gift baskets," says Charlotte.

"Looking ahead, strong storytelling, distinctive design and quality ingredients will continue to define success, with seasonal ranges and gifting formats playing a key role."

"We expect to see continued interest in innovative flavours, particularly biscuits that incorporate regionally distinctive or unusual ingredients, as well as growing demand for products with clear provenance and sustainability credentials," says Daniel. "Packaging and gifting will also continue to play an important role, particularly at key seasonal moments like Christmas where shoppers are looking for products that feel special.

"The biscuit sector feels genuinely exciting right now. Consumers are more curious and more discerning than they have ever been, and that creates real opportunities for producers who are willing to invest in quality, provenance and innovation."

For Dawn, quality will always win out against the cheaper, mainstream options. "You will have to pay more for the real deal, but it is worth it to have confidence in what you are eating, and to enjoy an actual treat rather than a simulation of one! No biscuit can count as 'good for you' but the fewer ingredients there are, the more likely it is to do be better for you than those with a longer list. And if you are paying a bit more for all-butter, real chocolate recipes you will enjoy eating it so much more, and that is good for the soul if not the waistline!"



SPECIALITY FOOD Stock Check 26



The Drinks Bakery
Pecorino, Rosemary & Seaweed
Snappy nibbles combining the umami savouriness of Pecorino and seaweed with a hint of rosemary.
thedrinksbakery.com



Island Bakery
Chocolate Gingers
Organic, all-natural shortbread style biscuits with moist stem ginger and a draping of fine dark chocolate.
islandbakery.scot



Peter's Yard
Pumpkin & Sunflower Seed Sourdough Crackers
Made with the finest ingredients and will work perfectly alongside all cheeses and dips.
petersyard.com



Miller's Baker & Barista
French Spiced Caramel
French-style biscuits filled with the decadent richness of butter, brown sugar and cinnamon.
artisanbiscuits.co.uk



Grandma Wild's
Savoury Biscuits for Cheese
A collection of biscuits in Black Pepper & Poppy Seeds, Mature Cheddar and Tomato & Linseed flavours.
grandmawilds.co.uk



Tregroes Waffles
Milk Chocolate
Exceptionally delicious spiced, chewy waffles, with 40% soft caramel centre, coated thickly (20%) with milk chocolate.
tregroeswaffles.co.uk



Olina's Bakehouse
Gluten Free Fig & Sunflower Seeded Toasts
Crisp, tasty toasts packed with berries and seeds, and produced in small batches.
gourmetpartners.co.uk



Farmhouse Biscuits
Oat Flips
These sweet, toasty, oaty biscuits are crunchy and crumbly and so nostalgic.
farmhouse-biscuits.co.uk



The Kindness Bakery
Ploughman's Lunch Oatcake Bites
Oatcake snacks filled with Lockerbie Cheddar and a tang of added pickle. Delicious alone or used as a canape base.
thekindnessbakery.co.uk



Nourish
Matcha Coconut Cookies
Plant-based, refined sugar-free and organic, these are made using AA grade Japanese matcha, Sri Lankan coconut and Madagascan vanilla.
nourish-growcookenjoy.com



MACKNADE

Taking Business Outside

From curated courtyards to 15,000-acre destinations, outdoor spaces are reshaping independent retail and provide ample opportunities to drive footfall, increase revenue and build brand trust, says Kayleigh Rattle

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As independent retailers look for new ways to stand out and strengthen customer loyalty, the space beyond the shopfront is becoming just as important as what happens inside it. From thoughtfully designed courtyards and garden terraces to expansive retail destinations that encourage visitors to linger, outdoor environments are evolving into powerful commercial tools.

More than simply an aesthetic upgrade though, these spaces can help businesses attract footfall, extend dwell time, create memorable experiences and build deeper connections with customers. Whether in urban neighbourhoods or across large-scale retail estates, taking business outside is opening up new possibilities for growth, community and long-term brand value, as our experts reveal.

Added value

As well as providing the customer with a place to enjoy their wares and the surroundings, outdoor spaces can actively reshape how customers understand value, explains Stefano Cuomo, CEO of Macknade. "Everything has got to have some added value for the customer; just saying you can sit outside in the sun isn't really enough – it's got to be an embedded experience, and of course that depends on the space you've got. We're fortunate to have a seven-acre site; traditional farm shops tend to have larger outdoor spaces, so we've got space to do things – we've got a bar, and other food and retail beverage offers and we're linking with other businesses in the area."

As such, independent retailers are increasingly treating outdoor areas as part of the overall brand experience, rather than simply an add-on. For Macknade, the concept of outdoor seating becomes more than just the seating itself; it becomes an experience, and a facilitator for outdoor events and experiences. "It's not just about the food and drink at the core of all activities; it's about how people want to hang out and how they're going to get satisfaction and enjoyment from that space. With outdoor spaces you can bring the products off the shelf – you can taste them, enjoy the music, and bring them alive. People then realise there's a reason why a product costs £25 on the shelf."



Second sale opportunities

Enabling customers to try – and enjoy – products beyond the shelf can also result in higher margin experiences, creating commercial opportunities that extend beyond immediate retail sales, says Oliver Stubbins, managing director at Welbeck Farm Shop. "Outdoor areas are essential to our offer and success. In addition to a large car park, our courtyard provides an open and welcoming space, with options to consider and browse, putting visitors in control of where they'd like to visit. There are no forced walkways, and lots of space to sit on the walls and enjoy lunch, or an incredible coffee from our very popular takeaway horsebox, which we introduced last year."

This increased dwell time is also facilitated by the larger Welbeck Estate that the farm shop sits within, plus the fact the ethos of the estate neatly aligns with the farm shop and the outdoor spaces. "The outdoor spaces complement our shop ethos which focuses on wellbeing, eating well, being active, and enjoying outdoor spaces. They go hand in hand, and our visitors can enjoy all these here at Welbeck, along with free parking."



MACKNADE

MAKE IT WORK

STEFANO CUOMO, CEO OF MACKNADE

- If you've got the space and assets, you're in a strong position to start
- Identify whether you take on the work yourselves; or work with a partner
- Consider your business model; assess why you're doing it and what value it can bring to the customer

EXPERT VIEW

Amy Elles, Stocks Kitchen

"Outdoor space has become incredibly important for us as we're based on a working farm. People increasingly want food experiences to feel connected to place, season and landscape. We're lucky to be based at Bowhouse, as the setting already gives that naturally, so we are going to lean into it in the future with long-table dining, fire cooking, courtyard events and encouraging people to linger rather than rush through."



"People increasingly want food experiences to feel connected to place, season and landscape"

Destination economy

While some independent retailers may be experimenting with curated outdoor spaces, larger estate-based destinations are taking the same principle and applying it at scale, and becoming destinations in their own right. "Welbeck is a 15,000-acre estate set within the heart of Sherwood Forest, on the border of North Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, offering far more to explore beyond the Welbeck Farm Shop. Visitors can enjoy contemporary art at the Harley Gallery and discover historic treasures in the Portland Collection, before stopping for refreshments at the Harley Café. The estate is also home to a Garden Centre, a Rum Distillery, a Brewery, the School of Artisan Food, and two pre-bookable dog parks. There are also picnic areas and seasonal open days at the Kitchen Garden, where visitors can see where much of the produce sold in the Farm Shop is grown."

The same applies to Macknade; rather than existing and operating as a traditional farm shop, it's using its outdoor space to also evolve into a lifestyle-led destination that complements the food sold in the farm shop. Part of its offering now includes a wellness offering from Kent-based Sea Scrub Sauna. "We've got a wood-fire sauna, hot tub, and two whisky barrel cold plunges. There's a strong community who sauna; while they might not necessarily be ingrained in the food and drink community in the first instance, by linking the two businesses, they benefit one another."

"Outdoor areas are essential to our offer and success"

Counterpoint.

SPONSORED BY PETER'S YARD



Building the Ultimate Counter

A hardworking counter is efficient, attractive and highly functional. Here's how to create your own

You've got your accompaniments down to a 't', your cutting kit is armed and ready and your customers are chomping at the bit to buy some excellent cheese in its prime... But without a functional space which works for both the people in front of it and behind it, and an array that will serve everyone in question, your cheese efforts could turn into an expensive error.

Of course, curating the ultimate selection of cheeses is a cornerstone of the ultimate cheese counter. "Getting the balance between classics and more unusual cheeses right is key. A great counter should include cheeses that customers immediately recognise and feel comfortable with – Brie, Cheddar, Comté, Stilton – but also a good range of more unusual cheeses that encourage curiosity and discovery," says Svetlana Kukharchuk, founder and CEO of The Cheese Lady.

"It's also important to cover a wide range of textures (soft, semi-firm, firm, hard, smooth, crumbly and so on), milk types (cow, sheep, goat, buffalo) and cheese styles (bloomy rind, washed rind, alpine, Cheddar, grana, blue and others). A good mix of countries and origins is important too. Balance across all of these areas creates a counter that feels exciting," she advises.

"A split across the classic cheese types as a broad guide I'd recommend," begins Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy. "40% hard (with a mix of crumblies, Cheddar-style and Continental); 10% goat/sheep, 25% blue (with at the very least a softer blue then a firmer-Stilton-style) and 25% soft."

While every customer base will have its favourite cheeses that retailers will do their best to keep in-counter, there's no hard and fast rule as to what to stock year-round, says Andy. "I don't think in this day and age there are any 'must-stocks' as long as you have these bases covered. If you're more of a passive counter, letting the customer choose, you may want some big names: the Stiltons, famous Cheddars, Manchego, etc. but if you have engaging, trained staff, this really isn't necessary as they can hopefully guide the customer around to find something they like."

Regionality can play a role, though. "If you are a regional cheese-shop you may lean a little more towards a particular style (we have three Wensleydales and two Lancashires, but only two Cheddars; in the South-West I'd expect a reverse of that)," he says.

The art of presentation

The best range of cheeses in the world could still sit there unbought if their presentation isn't up to scratch. "Presentation is key," says Svetlana. "Cheeses should be arranged in a way that has some logic, whether that's by country, milk type, style or strength, so customers can either understand it visually or staff can explain it easily."

"We like to keep our counter looking full and abundant, as it naturally catches people's attention. When you have a good mix of cheeses, you automatically create contrast through different colours, textures and shapes. Most importantly, cheese should always look loved and well cared for – well wrapped, well signed and presented at its best."

"The old cliches 'eye line is buy line' and 'if you can't see it, you can't sell it' still ring true," advises Andy. The ideal scenario, he says, are "Big central displays, not too cluttered, cheeses well organised into style, and labels clear and inviting: not too detailed or too small a text with big punchy headlines."

He also suggests pointing out any key exciting factors – a local, a regional, a special age profile. "But not too many – just on a few key cheeses. And cut the soft cheese open – even if they're individuals; the texture is so important."

Functionality matters

For a cheese counter to work at its best, cheesemongers need to tailor its functionality to work within their requirements. "Functionality is very important," agrees Svetlana. "Cheeses need to be easy to reach, easy to restock and practical for staff to work with throughout the day.

"Having a counter that opens from the front makes restocking much easier," she continues. "I also think it's important for staff to regularly step out from behind the counter and look at the cheeses from the customer's perspective, because what looks organised from behind the counter doesn't always look the same from the front."

While it's possible to create a counter that functions perfectly behind the scenes and boosts sales, that doesn't mean that the job stops there. "A cheese counter is never really finished," Svetlana explains. "It is always evolving as cheeses sell, new cheeses arrive and seasons change. It's a living thing that constantly needs attention and care, and that's part of what makes it so enjoyable."

"I always say that you want to spend as much time as possible serving the customer, as little as possible doing the functional stuff: cutting, wrapping, putting on scales," suggests Andy. "The most important thing when a customer comes into a shop is that they feel welcome, happy and engaged. They must leave having a positive experience with some cheese they'll really enjoy."

> *A cheese counter is a living thing that needs attention and care, and that's what makes it so enjoyable*

MAKE IT WORK

ANDY SWINSCOE OF THE COURTYARD DAIRY SHARES HIS TIPS

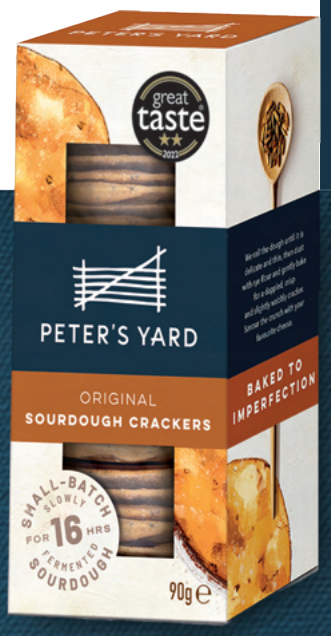
- Cheese should only be touched a minimal amount of times: cut, wrap, on till -> bag.
- Think carefully about your flow around the back so multiple servers are not blocking each other, wax paper and all utensils are straight to hand and you don't have to move much to bag up/store the cheese.
- The more you move about, turn your back to customers, you have to use multiple options on a till, the worse the customer experience is.



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.



The Cut.

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

Real Cheese Project finalists revealed

The Real Cheese Project, supported by Chiswick Cheese Market, has announced the finalists for People's Cheese 2026: Britain's Best New Cheese, and is inviting people to reserve a tasting box and join the judging panel for the online final taking place Saturday 17th October 2026.

Over 500 people – double the number of judges from 2025's initiative – tasted over 20 newly launched cheeses from across the UK and Ireland on 17th May to create the list of cheeses entering the final stage of the competition.

The four finalists are Lindley, a lactic cows' cheese made with raw milk by Jake Goldstein at Nottinghamshire's Primrose Creamery; Jemima Wild Filly, a Caerphilly-style cheese with wild garlic made using pasteurised milk from the cheesemaker's own herd of Jersey cows by Alan Latter from Caws Pencw in Fishguard; Tuppence, a small yeast-ripened goats button made using unpasteurised milk and the cheesemaker's own goat's milk by Roger Longman at Whitelake Cheese; and Carreg Las, crafted by Carwyn Adams at Caws Cenarth, a semi-hard sheep's blue made in Carmarthenshire, Wales with pasteurised milk.

The live online final will be broadcast on Saturday 17th October at 7pm and hosted by comedian and International Cheese Judge Marcus Brigstocke, alongside The Real Cheese Project's James Grant and a panel of experts. Viewers will be invited to vote for this year's Champion at the end of the event.

New chapter for Param Paneer



Futura Foods' Param brand has relaunched its paneer with a new focus on its protein content.

The change positions paneer as a versatile protein source rather than a product reserved for serving alongside Indian dishes, and thanks to its ultrafiltration production process, Param Paneer has a compact, firm texture that allows it to be served in multiple ways.

Its mild flavour makes it suitable for serving with a wide variety of meals and its dense texture means that it works well with marinades.

The product's packaging has had a refresh too, and is now bold and contemporary – a move away from its previous heritage-rich approach.

Rhian Newman, head of marketing at Futura Foods, said "Paneer is widely perceived as belonging to one cuisine and a limited number of dishes. In reality, our research shows there is significant opportunity to reposition it for younger consumers, looking for protein-led choices that require minimal preparation, but can still carry bold flavours.

"Param Paneer delivers higher protein and calcium per 100g than tofu and eggs and as a dairy product, is a complete protein. Positioned alongside meat-free alternatives, paneer offers retailers and consumers alike a versatile vegetarian protein that meets growing demand for experimentation and everyday use."



New cheesemaker launches cheese in educational push

A newly-launched small-scale, award-winning cheesemaker based at The School of Artisan Food on the Welbeck Estate is spearheading a project to communicate the natural variation and seasonality of raw milk cheese to consumers.

As part of the project, Primrose Creamery have launched Eggleston Reserve – a further-aged, limited edition seasonal version of its washed rind lactic cheese, Eggleston, and is supporting the launch with detailed batch and field notes to accompany the cheese.

The notes include information such as weather conditions, pasture changes, make adjustments and affinage decisions to educate consumers about raw cheese.

They are designed to "help bridge the gap between producer and consumer, and demystify the world of raw cheese," according to Jake Goldstein, founder.

"One of the things we've found is that people are often used to thinking of cheese as a highly standardised product, whereas with raw milk cheeses the milk is constantly changing through the seasons and that has a genuine impact on flavour, texture and behaviour.

"Raw milk cheese can also occasionally receive negative or oversimplified press, so we're interested in finding better ways to communicate what makes these cheeses special, while also helping people understand the skill, care and decision-making involved in producing them responsibly."

Documentary released in effort to save artisan cheese

A new documentary, *Cheese – Searching for a Taste of Place* has been released on Amazon Prime to educate consumers about the value of artisan cheese and the challenges it faces across the world.

The third episode, *Milk & Microbes*, visits Kirkhams Farmhouse Cheeses in Lancashire and compares the iconic cheese with French Farmhouse Saler cheese.

Other episodes cover the artisan cheese industries in America, Australia, France, and Greece and Cyprus. Another series named *Cheese Slices*, originally created in 2001, is also now available to stream or download on Amazon Prime and Apple TV.

It consists of six 25-minute episodes dedicated to farmhouse cheesemakers in England, Scotland and Ireland and includes rare historical footage of cheesemaking legends including Veronica Steele, Lucy Appleby, Jeff Reade, Jamie Montgomery and Randolph Hodgson.



Rodda's to launch cottage cheese

This summer will see production of cottage cheese commence at Rodda's production site in Scorrier, Cornwall.

The business is investing £6 million in a new, state-of-the-art cottage cheese facility in order to ultimately produce 4,000 tonnes of cottage cheese per year inspired by the consumer demand for high-protein, natural dairy products and using surplus skimmed milk.

"As a fifth-generation Cornish dairy business, we're proud to be investing in a new manufacturing capability in Scorrier and in skilled jobs for local people. It's a business-led investment that also supports our longterm ambition to run a more efficient manufacturing business here in Cornwall, with our journey increasingly guided by circular-economy principles," said Nicholas Rodda, managing director of Rodda's.

"Cottage cheese is one of the fastest-growing dairy categories in the UK, and this facility allows us to respond to that demand while getting more value from every litre of milk we buy from our farming families.

"This more efficient use of our milk intake will not only support farmgate returns, but also provide more predictable demand for farming families in the Rodda's supply chain, and strengthen domestic food production resilience."

41.9%

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



CHEESES THAT I LOVE

SIMON WARREN, EAST STREET DELI



CORNISH KERN



I'm often asked what my favourite cheese is and while I can never give one definitive answer (not too sure if that's because there's so many to choose from or I'd feel I'm being disloyal to all of the others if I chose just one!) this cheese is always in my top two or three. I love cheese with big depth of flavour and the Kern is full of it. Rich, nutty, slightly sweet and a little Comté-esque, I love the Kern with a few slices of apple. This is a truly delicious cheese and one that always finds its way onto my board.

ISLE OF WIGHT BLUE

Such a popular cheese, soft and creamy with rich blue notes. We've sold this cheese from the day we opened and there's barely been a day when we haven't had it in stock. Our soft mild blues like Montagnolo are very popular, but this one really stands out on a cheeseboard. They make some great cheeses on the Isle of Wight and this is right up there with the best!

ENGLISH PECORINO, WHITE LAKE CHEESE



I love the fact that sheep's and goats' milk cheeses are becoming so popular. There's no way that a list of my top 10 cheeses would be complete without at least one, so where better to look than White Lake Cheese in Somerset? We started selling the English Pecorino a couple of years ago and it was an instant hit with our staff and customers. The fresh, clean taste of the sheep's milk along with the sweet and savoury flavour profile make this the sort of cheese you just keep going back to the fridge for. I could've chosen almost any of the White Lake range, but their English Pecorino is a real favourite.

CRANBORNE BLUE, BOOK & BUCKET CHEESE COMPANY



We love supporting local cheese makers and at The East Street Deli we're lucky to have the brilliant Book & Bucket Cheese Company on our doorstep. Their Cranborne Blue has very gentle blue veining and a delicate flavour and is made with milk from Jersey cows that graze the fields just a few miles away. This blue is quite different from the more well-known Stilton cheeses and Blue Vinny but offers a different flavour profile and texture and, when it's made so locally, it's a must for our selection.



When times are tough your USP matters more than ever!



LAURA BRADLEY
INDIE FUDE

Walk into almost any deli or farm shop in the UK and you'll hear the same concerns repeated quietly between the shelves: margins are tighter, customer habits are shifting, costs keep climbing and competition feels endless. In moments like this, it can be tempting to widen your offering, chase every trend, or try to become all things to all people. But in my experience, the businesses that truly stand out in speciality food are often the ones brave enough to do the opposite!

At Indie Füde, Johnny and I built our business around one very clear decision. We would champion Irish artisan food producers. Exclusively. No imported cheeses sitting beside local ones "just in case." Just a deep commitment to telling the story of Irish food and the people behind it. Two people on a mission to show the value of supporting local.

Over the years some people probably thought that was limiting. Especially 10 years ago when 'shopping local' wasn't as on trend as it is today. And in some ways, it is. Having a strong USP means saying no far more often than you say yes, especially at the beginning when no one really understands what your business is about. But what I've learned over the last decade is that the right restrictions can actually create enormous opportunity. For us, that has meant doors opening that simply wouldn't have existed otherwise - all because we've consistently flown the flag for Irish produce.A clear USP gives people a reason to remember you.

Clarity matters

Customers don't necessarily remember every product they bought, but they do remember how a place made them feel. They remember what it stood for. If your business has a strong identity and genuine passion behind it, people connect with that emotionally. For us, focusing on Irish food has allowed us to become more than just a shop - and given us real direction. It's shaped our events, our tours, our gift hampers, our online content, our relationships with producers and even the community that has formed around us. Customers know what they're coming to us for. Producers know what we value. That consistency builds trust over time.

If your business has a strong identity and genuine passion, people connect with that emotionally

And, perhaps most importantly, it creates valuable expertise.

When you narrow your focus, you naturally deepen your knowledge. Instead of trying to know a little about everything, you begin to understand your niche inside out. That confidence translates directly to customers. Whether it's recommending a raw milk goat's cheese from County Clare (St Tola, for those interested!), explaining the seasonality of a local product or introducing someone to a producer they've never heard of before, that depth of knowledge becomes part of the experience people are paying for. I believe that knowledge is especially important in speciality food because people increasingly want connection alongside quality. They want stories. They want transparency. They want to know where things come from and why they matter. They want to feel like their decisions are informed, and their money is being spent in a considered manner. A USP rooted in genuine passion helps deliver that naturally!

A strong ethos can keep a business resilient

Of course, the key word there is genuine. Customers can spot manufactured branding a mile away. A USP isn't just a marketing slogan or a trendy aesthetic. It has to actually mean something to you. It should shape decision-making behind the scenes, not just appear on social media captions. Over the years we have seen other companies try and replicate our USP and fail. Because – surprise, surprise – having a USP isn't the key to guaranteed success, or the ticket to your fortune. There's much more to running a successful business than that. But the passion behind a business with a genuine USP that defines their ethos is often what keeps businesses resilient during harder periods. Be that financially or otherwise.

Running an independent food business can be exhausting. There are far easier industries to be in. But having a strong sense of purpose gives you something steady to return to when things feel chaotic. It reminds you why you started in the first place. I know that for me personally, when I consciously return to our reason for existing - our mission to support and showcase our local producers – I can give myself a well-needed reset. A trip to visit a local farmer, a couple of Instagram messages to a producer I now call a friend, a short phone call with our local food officer in Ards and North Down Borough Council – and I'm reminded that we really are all in this together. Ironically, narrowing our focus expanded our world. And perhaps that's the real power of a strong USP. It doesn't box you in. It gives you direction.



Artisan Cheese Awards announce 2026 Supreme Champion

A goat's cheese from County Galway in Ireland has been named Supreme Champion at the 10th edition of the Artisan Cheese Awards.

Made by Dutch-born Marion Roeleveld at Killeen Farmhouse Cheese, the Gouda-style Extra Mature Goat's Cheese is made using pasteurised goat's milk and animal rennet, and aged for between 12-18+ months.

"In over 70 years of eating cheese that has to be one of the most memorable cheeses I have ever tasted," said Dr Matthew O'Callaghan OBE, organiser of the Artisan Cheese Awards. "It is certainly the best goat's cheese in the UK and Ireland. When cut it is brilliant white inside. The texture is a hard, slightly crunchy feel in the mouth. Taste is clean, slightly sweet, nutty, very pleasant and extremely moreish."

8.5%

Cheese has become an increasingly popular fixture on foodservice menus, growing by 8.5% in the past four years

AHDB

Ilchester creates new formats for Applewood and Mexicana



Blended cheese producer Ilchester have launched Applewood and Mexicana cheeses in a convenient new format.

The new 185g bars are designed to increase versatility and inspire creative use of the cheeses in the kitchen, and is more suitable for slicing, grating and cubing than the cheeses' original format.

"Our flavoured cheeses have been elevating meals and occasions for more than 60 years – flavour and format innovation is part of our DNA and the new 185g bar adds to this strong heritage," said James Catchpole, managing director of The Ilchester Cheese Co.

"This about versatility of usage and increasing suitability for whatever the cooking or enjoyment occasion is. We really believe we're bringing a format to market that's going to be extremely well received and securing these additional listings is testament to the strength and popularity of the brands, the ranges, and continued demand from customers."

A-Z of artisan cheese: Wensleydale

Speciality Food takes an in-depth look at one of England's finest artisan cheeses.

Milk: Cow's
Variety: Hard, crumbly, both pasteurised and unpasteurised
Colour: Pale, white and milky, to gently creamy
Average Size: Around 4-5kg
Country of origin: England

Modern Wensleydale cheesemaking is in the hands of a small, but incredibly passionate collective of makers such as Curlew Dairy, Stonebeck Cheese and Wensleydale Creamery, which make quality their absolute priority. Then, of course, there's the Wallace & Gromit effect, which boosts sales time and time again as Aardman Animation's beloved films do the rounds on TV during the festive season and bank holidays.

Only Wensleydale cheese made within a specific area of the Yorkshire Dales can carry PGI status, and be labelled as Yorkshire Wensleydale says Sandra Bell of Wensleydale Creamery, in Hawes. "It has an enormous amount of heritage and provenance going all the way back to 1150 when the Cistercian monks first settled in the area and started making cheese," she says. "Then we had the dissolution of the monasteries, with recipes and cheesemaking passed onto farmhouse wives over 300 years until the first commercial creamery was founded in Hawes."

Thanks to its versatile flavour, Wensleydale is available in a number of formats to suit all palates.



GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOW

Great Yorkshire Show 2026 preview



The Great Yorkshire Show is primed to host the Cheese & Dairy Awards in July 2026

The team behind The Great Yorkshire Show is getting ready for its best event yet, and this year's show – running from Tuesday 14th to Friday 17th July 2026 at Harrogate's Great Yorkshire Showground – is expected to wow consumers and industry alike.

Crowning the best of British cheese

The Cheese & Dairy Awards 2026 are a celebration of the very best cheese from the four corners of the UK, hosted in Yorkshire's iconic town of Harrogate. Yorkshire itself is home to a number of renowned cheesemakers and is opening its doors to cheese businesses who will compete in over 160 categories. Visitors to The Cheese & Dairy Show can have a go at cheese judging, taking their cue from some of the most discerning experts in the world of cheese who judge the Show's entries.

New for this year are three digital classes, marking 2026 as an innovative year in the Awards' rich history and a welcoming of a wider network – from specialist cheesemongers, independent retailers such as farm shops and delicatessen, to grazing platter businesses, hotels and restaurants – to showcase their skills. These new classes are Champion Cheese Board, Grazing Platter and Cheese Celebration Cake.

Cheese businesses across the UK are being invited to enter the new digital classes – entry forms are available at greatyorkshireshow.co.uk, and entries to the digital classes close on 19th June.

Entrants are invited to share digital photographs of their entries, and winners will be showcased at the Great Yorkshire Show, where their entries will be showcased to the event's 140,000 attendees.

The winners of all of the Awards classes will be announced on the morning of Wednesday 15th July.



DID YOU KNOW?

On Thursday 16th July, once the Awards judging is complete, the annual Cheese Auction will be held and is expected to raise thousands of pounds for charities

A destination for cheese fans

Cheese lovers are sure to relish The Cheese & Dairy Show, which incorporates the Cheese & Dairy Awards, cheese making demonstrations and engaging conversations hosted by Homage2Fromage where cheese producers will share their expertise – including which cheeses pair best with beer on Tuesday 14th July. Visitors can also become judges for the day by taking part in the Blind Mice Cheese Tastings on Wednesday 15th, Thursday 16th and Friday 17th July, where they can also put their cheese knowledge to the test with the popular Master Rind quiz.





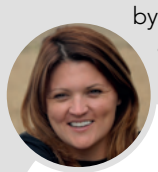


EXPERT VIEW

Caroline Bell, Chief Steward

"It's so exciting to be taking these classes out into the community in a way that makes it easy for businesses to be part of the Great Yorkshire Show and showcase their talent," said Caroline Bell, chief steward of the Great Yorkshire Show's Cheese and Dairy Show.

"The digital classes will create a visually engaging competition that celebrates how cheese is presented and enjoyed across Yorkshire and beyond within the hospitality and food retail sector. It is another great way to shine the spotlight on a food that is produced with amazing craft and skill and is enjoyed by cheese-lovers across the country."



"We are shining the spotlight in a food that is produced with amazing craft and skill"





International Cheese & Dairy Awards 2026 Preview

The iconic event is back for 2026 and better than ever, hosting exciting innovations and thousands of cheeses from around the world





For decades the International Cheese & Dairy Expo – this year held at Staffordshire County Showground on 24th-25th June 2026 – has been firmly marked in the calendars of cheese industry professionals, and no wonder. With hundreds of judges walking its halls and thousands of cheeses primed to their peak and ready to be assessed, as well as a cornucopia of content to relish, it's a veritable paradise for cheese lovers of all persuasions.

Indeed, the numbers involved in this year's event are more impressive than ever, with 250 judges and 120 stewards set to be in attendance and an expected 4,500 cheeses entering the awards for the chance to be awarded one of these most prestigious accolades.



Around 3,000 visitors are expected to attend the event across the two days, making this one of the largest gatherings in the international cheese sector.

As the name suggests, this is where the very best international cheese meets the greatest dairy products Britain has to offer. In fact, the number of entries hailing from overseas has doubled for 2026 with many entries coming from EU and EFTA countries – no doubt aided by ICDA's investment in appointing overseas ambassadors to support and promote the awards.

New for 2026

This year's edition of the International Cheese & Dairy Expo and Awards sees a number of fresh elements in a demonstration of the occasion's continually evolving appeal.

2026 sees the opening of a Media Pod, courtesy of Christeyns, who will be hosting interviews across both days of the event – including features with the winners of the Awards – and PFM and the Italian Trade Agency are holding a networking reception to celebrate the award winners on the Thursday evening.



There are a number of high profile new partners for the event, including Novonesis who will be branding the awards hall to reflect their prestige, Weadons who will be hosting the Expo lounge and trophy presentation, and Tesco who are sponsoring the Young Cheesemaker of the Year award as well as the Supreme Artisan Trophy with a potential listing for the winner, providing ingredients for the Food Service Stage, and sponsoring the Artisan Producers area.

Speaking of artisan producers, ICDA has joined forces with the PTF and SCA to support artisan producers in the UK, and the food service sector has a bigger presence at the event than ever before – the topic has been added into the content to broaden the occasion's appeal for producers; a Food Service attraction has been added to the show, and the food service competitive classes have





been reworked, supported and sponsored by Lactalis.

Diary notes

On the afternoon of Wednesday 24th June the ICDA will be hosting a PTF meeting as well as the annual Society of Dairy Technology Symposium, followed by an evening dinner.



The following morning, Thursday 25th June, World Panel will be giving a presentation off the Trophy Dias, highlighting trending consumer habits. This session will close after a 15-minute Q&A session, where visitors are welcomed to share their questions with the experts.

Don't forget to pick up a Speciality Food bag on the way into the hall on Wednesday morning, 24th June!

EXPERT VIEW

Ian Luxton, chairman of the International Cheese & Dairy Expo and Awards



"As we approach this year's International Cheese and Dairy Expo and Awards, it is worth reflecting on the last few years and the many challenges faced by our industry and why there is a need for such events.

"I hear so many times 'there's is nothing quite like' and 'I'm looking forward to ICDA this year' it seems to me that there is so much passion for the event by many in the industry. From the tough months of Covid and potential capitulation of the event to the red-carpet event of today, it demonstrates how hard many people have worked to maintain one of the oldest and largest events in the world protecting its long heritage. It is in many respects a unique event bringing together the entire supply chain, including suppliers to the industry, retailers, Food Service, B2B, manufacturers, international visitors and many others at a weatherproof venue to meet old friends, network, discuss business, benchmark products against peers, appreciate the diversity of products offered by the industry and create interest and exploit the spoils of competition. The passion in our industry is remarkable, and this fuels the work we all do to maintain this old event.

"The passion in our industry is remarkable, and this fuels the work we all do to maintain this old event"

"This year sees a full hall and significantly increased international entries and World Panel will provide a presentation off the Trophy Dias on Thursday 25th June covering industry trends prior to trophy presentations. The Society of Dairy Technology will be holding their symposium and annual dinner on Wednesday 24 June. There will also be a PODCAST area to capture winning competitors and others for comments. Watch out for the roving cameraman too!

Once again, I must thank all those sponsors who have contributed to the success of the Expo and the committee and many other volunteers from the industry, who give up their time to make sure the Expo remains a key and relevant event for the industry."









Beyond the shelf: why hosting events is a key strategy for building customer loyalty and trust

With customers hungry for experiences and connection, events are becoming a powerful tool for both physical and online retailers says Kayleigh Rattle

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As consumers increasingly seek connection, experience and authenticity alongside the products they buy, events are becoming an invaluable part of the independent retailer toolkit. From tastings and producer meet-and-greets to seasonal festivals and community gatherings, events offer retailers the opportunity to bring their products and values to life, create memorable moments and build stronger relationships with customers. Whether driving footfall, encouraging discovery or turning first-time visitors into loyal regulars, retailers across the speciality food and drink are finding that bringing shelves to life can deliver long-lasting benefits.

Building brand trust

In the age of online shopping and faceless retail, customers are increasingly keen to understand provenance and the stories behind products, and events allow retailers to translate their products into meaningful experiences. Beyond simply selling products, events can build memories around the brand and connections with those selling the products.

"People are craving connection and experience more than ever, particularly within food and drink," explains Jessica Summer, founder of luxury cheese and wine business, Mouse & Grape. "Artisan producers and independent retailers have such rich stories behind what they do, and events allow those stories to come to life in a way that simply can't happen on a shelf or online. It can be difficult to communicate the beauty and craftsmanship behind products through retail alone, whereas events give customers the chance to taste, learn and connect more personally. Events also help build community, strengthen customer loyalty and attract new audiences.



We often find people come to Mouse & Grape for an event having never visited before – whether drawn in by the theme or gifted tickets – and many go on to become regular customers.

"Being able to spend time with our customers outside of our normal hours and offer them an experience that you can't get locally is fantastic," agrees Josh Patrick and James Channon of The Cellar Door in Wivenhoe, Essex. "It allows us to get to know them better and to receive immediate feedback on wines that they might not normally choose, so the next time we get a shipment of new wines I can have a mental list of specific customers who I know will love a certain wine."

MAKE IT WORK

SALLY BENDALL, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF HOLLOW TREES FARM'S TOP TIPS FOR HOSTING YOUR FIRST EVENT:

- Plan well ahead
- Walk the customer / visitor journey of the event in detail. Put yourself in their shoes
- Ask the wider team for ideas and suggestions in the planning and creativity stages, and not just those directly involved – there could be some unexpected hidden gems!
- Make sure you have good back up stock of whatever you are promoting





EXPERT VIEW

Amy Elles, Stocks Kitchen

"Hosting events has probably been one of the biggest shifts for us already. We're finding people are really craving experiences around food again, particularly cookbook events, tastings, suppers and demos – things that feel intimate, relaxed and slightly behind-the-scenes. There's a real appetite for connection and storytelling around food at the moment, not just consumption."



"There's a real appetite for connection and storytelling around food, not just consumption"

For Sally Bendall, managing director of Suffolk's Hollow Trees Farm, events enable her to engage differently with customers compared to a normal shopping visit, resulting in both repeat and new footfall. "Customers get to see more of 'us' and more of what Hollow Trees Farm is all about during our events, plus they get to spend more time with our team and other suppliers."

In practice

From product-led tastings to seasonal and family events, there's scope for retailers to engage in a wide variety of events. "At Mouse & Grape, we run a mix of tasting-led events including wine and cheese pairings, producer collaborations and themed seasonal evenings, alongside more informal community events like 'bring your own baby' mornings and our local run club."

"We try to host a public event once a month, where we'll choose a specific theme such as our Pink Rosé Club and guide our guests through six different wines on that theme," says Patrick and Channon. "The other tastings we do are private events where we work with the organiser to create a theme or style of wine they want. We try to make events as fun as possible; we wander around with the wines and offer them to each group individually, and give a quick explanation of why we chose that specific producer, region and style, and why we like it. We feel this style of informal wine tasting makes it more of an experience for our guests, and allows them to enjoy an evening chatting to friends and trying some fantastic wines."

"We host a range of events all year round, from birthday parties on a weekly basis to seasonal school holiday events at Halloween, Easter and Christmas," adds Bendall. "In the café we also have 'knit and natter' and a 'book club' alternating each Thursday. We also run a year-round education programme that sees school groups visiting each day from March until October, and a large Food and Farming careers event in June. Our Halloween seasonal event and the Food and Farming Careers events see the largest footfall."

Commercial benefits

From increasing dwell time and return custom to creating conversion through sampling, events hold meaningful monetary prospects for indies. "The first event we did was just a one-off showcase to get people to try wines that we thought would be good for Christmas Day, but within a day we had a queue of people asking for more events and waiting lists for the next event, so we couldn't really turn them down and started arranging more," say Patrick and Channon.

As well as increasing dwell – and potential purchase – time, events can also encourage return custom, says Bendall. "We actively give customers more to see and do during all the events so they have more 'touch points' to hear about what we can offer all year round, and a reason to return at another time."

Pros and cons

But it's important to note that hosting events does also come with its own challenges, from staff demands to logistical considerations and of course, a need to keep customers happy. "Parking can be challenging on wet days as our overflow car parks are on grass," shares Bendall. "Having a varied visitor range like we do, keeping regular customers happy when we are running events – especially the events that are aimed at children / families that they don't want to be part of – is key; they tend to like their regular, quieter shop."

Ultimately, it comes down to enjoying the occasion, and making sure you don't push yourself too far when hosting your first event, says Patrick and Channon. "Our first piece of advice is to start small. If hosting events is not what you're used to, it can be hard to get it right from the offset. The first few events we did were with smaller groups and at a slightly lower price. This gave us a bit of breathing room to get things right and improve as we move forward.

"Our second piece of advice is to try and have fun with it. Yes, you absolutely have to be knowledgeable and professional, but if your guests can see that you're enjoying hosting them it puts everyone at ease – the most important part of running an event is making sure that your guests are comfortable and are having a fantastic experience."

"Events allow producer stories to come to life in a way that simply can't happen on a shelf or online

MAKE IT WORK

JESSICA SUMMER, MOUSE & GRAPE

"My main advice would be to start small and focus on creating a welcoming, authentic experience rather than overcomplicating things. Focus on what you specialise in. It takes time to build momentum and attendance can be hit and miss, which is completely normal. Try different ideas, learn what works for your audience and repeat what resonates.

Clear communication is key, as customers want to know exactly what they're getting, and atmosphere matters just as much as the products themselves. Collaborating with producers can make events far more engaging, but it's also important to understand your costs and make sure events are commercially sustainable, and not just good for marketing."

Last Words.

THE SOCIAL PUNCH



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

For some business owners, social media is an exciting arena: a place to showcase their creativity, speak directly to customers and exchange ideas and inspiration. For others, it's more of a necessary evil – a place way out of their comfort zone and a job that is forever slipping to the bottom of their to-do list.

For those in the second camp, it might be disheartening to see trends come and go and feel that your business – be it a rural farm shop, an up-and-coming product brand or a high street cheesemonger – is missing out.

On Instagram and TikTok, silly dances, trending audio and blink-and-you'll-miss-them memes tend to fill feeds, so what's the deal for fine food retailers and producers? Do you need to join in to be noticed?

There will always be a lucky handful of businesses that see a huge spike in views and engagement when they participate in trends. But for each of these, there is likely a dozen who filmed the video, pressed 'share' and saw their post disappear into the ether.

In my view, social media is all about building and engaging your own audience – and that will look different depending on your brand and its goals. Instead of feeling you need to mimic every trend, make a list of competitors who create the kind of content you – and by extension your customers – enjoy, and take inspiration from that instead.

That might include light-hearted trend videos as well as a mix of informative, storytelling content; shop or product news; and behind-the-scenes reveals.

So no, you don't have to feel bad if you're not down to dance in front of the camera. You might get some new eyes on your profile, but will they turn into customers?

At the same time, don't be afraid to take a small step out of your comfort zone and try something new. I've spoken to one retailer who worked with an agency to create content they never would have dreamed of making on their own, only to find the videos were actually resonating with customers.

So maybe it's time to show your face on screen for the first time, add a voiceover to a tour of your shop or even do a silly sketch with your coworkers. Whatever you do, remember to keep your customers at the heart.



"Whatever you do, remember to keep your customers at the heart

TRIED & TESTED



Islands
75% Dark Chocolate Buttons

Dark chocolate is a wonderful thing, and while there are plenty of incredible single origin speciality bars on the market that are perfect for relishing solo, when it comes to options suitable for cooking the options are much more limited. This eye-catching tin ticks all of the boxes with its rounded fruity and lightly spiced flavour and versatile format. I've been using the buttons to make salted chocolate sorbet and (relatively) healthy treats, and can attest to them being delicious to snack on, too...

islandschocolate.com

Nirvana
Hazy Grapefruit Lager



If you've ever experienced the joy of an Australian-style radler, you will attest to the fact that it is the ultimate summer sip – and now you can enjoy it whether you're drinking or not. This 0.3% thirst quencher is zesty and fragrant thanks to the pink grapefruit lemonade added to Nirvana's signature Pils lager and just perfect for sipping in the sunshine.

nirvanabrewery.com

London Borough of Jam
Raspberry & Hibiscus Flower



I'm a long-time fan of raspberry jam above all others thanks to its intense tang, and my tastebuds have been piqued even more by this preserve boosted with the piquancy of hibiscus flowers. Delicious in oh so many ways, its short ingredients list is testament to its pure, unadulterated and thoroughly moreish flavour.

londonboroughofjam.com

Fearne & Rosie
Strawberry Jam



My toddler has recently discovered the joy of jam, but I'm keen to avoid welcoming him into the world of sugar-rich indulgences just yet. Thank goodness I'm bringing him up in the era of Fearne & Rosie, who craft utterly delicious no-nasty jams that contain 70% fruit and far less sugar than many alternatives. We're both fans.

fearneandrosie.co.uk

COMING UP NEXT...



It's time to talk **CHRISTMAS**! We commence the celebrations with our pick of 2026's seasonal fare and share top **FESTIVE STRATEGIES**.



Plus, we deep dive into the world of **MUST-STOCK GIFTS AND HOMEWARES** as well as share our annual **ARTISAN CHEESE** report and tuck into the finest **YOGHURT, BUTTER AND CREAM**. Plus, publishing alongside is **SNACK BUYER**, an invaluable resource for navigating the snacking sector.

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STORE SPOTLIGHT









Suffolk Food Hall

OWNERS: OLIVER, ROBERT AND AJ PAUL
LOCATION: WHERSTEAD, IPSWICH

What's the philosophy behind the business?
The idea that created Suffolk Food Hall was to be able to provide people with local produce made in East Anglia and would therefore be of high quality. It's always been about providing customers with the best service possible which extends into our product offering.



What inspires the team?
Our customers! At Suffolk Food Hall we love helping our customers find the perfect treat or dinner to take home, or to help with creating the ideal gift and hamper. Being proud of the products we sell makes it easy to recommend customers different options.

Who shops with you?
Our customer base is quite varied from young families to an older generation meeting with friends for a catch up. Whoever it is we're happy to see them and always welcome everyone with a smile.

What exciting plans do you have in the pipeline?
The head office team at SFH are constantly working on developing the business further, to meet customer needs and to inspire the local community. Therefore, we have got lots of exciting plans in place for later this year and a couple of year into the future. It's always worth keeping an eye on our website, socials and in store for the latest news!

What do you love most about what you do?
At Suffolk Food Hall our most favourite thing is delighting customers. We love giving people an enjoyable and memorable experience, whether they're dining in The Restaurant, grabbing a coffee from The Café or tasting their way through Suffolk in the Food Hall. Alongside this, we also love giving local producers a place where they can sell their produce and increase awareness of local farming.

What's trending for you right now?
The food industry is changing a lot especially with the wider economic events and so we always ensure that we adapt ourselves to meet changing customer needs. Right now, high protein, low food miles and low additives are trending and what customers are looking for to enable healthy eating. For us, we can supply this effectively with our produce coming from farms just a couple of miles down the road and suppliers being within the East Anglian area. If you're looking for local, quality food and drink, this is the place to be!

We always ensure we adapt ourselves to meet changing customer needs

Talking Italian

Sponsored by Garofalo



THE SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY

FRESH PRODUCE SHOWCASING INCREDIBLE FLAVOUR, SIMPLE, TIME-HONOURED RECIPES, GATHERINGS RICH IN FAMILY AND STORIES, AND ABUNDANCE...

When British shoppers think of Italian food, that last word plays a vital part in the images their minds conjure up and therefore the selling opportunities offered by food and drink hailing from Italy.

Abundance doesn't have to mean decadence; it is just as – if not more – tempting when combined with natural simplicity. A display brimming with glossy tomatoes on the vine, lemons stacked generously in a large basket or bowl and shelves rich with premium and attractively packaged pastas and pre-prepared sauces are just a couple of simple ways to bring the Italian spirit of generosity to your store.

While plenty is appealing, too much is often offputting, so smart display is vital – you're aiming for the opposite of the 'stack them high, sell them cheap' mentality, so keep excess hidden and try to maintain a sense of aspirational order (this may mean bringing in some new display tools and techniques).

A warm welcome to a counter or display with a bite or glug of something delicious, informal and without pressurised expectation, also creates an atmosphere of conviviality and generosity – especially when positioned around the store rather than behind the barrier of a counter.

If you have space, consider creating an 'al fresco eating' display, bringing together aperitivo-friendly tipples and snacks presented in outdoor-ready glasses and platters to inspire shoppers to gather with friends and family for a gathering seasoned with Italian generosity; samples could be part of this vision, with smaller bowls of grissini and other savoury bites positioned next to open dips (and directions to find them in-store).

Summer is the ideal time to tap into the Italian taste for abundance. Plenty of deliciously fresh and flavourful food is at its peak and Brits are chomping at the bit to get outside and share fabulous fare.



YAMAS!
Share the Mediterranean

Spread...

Dollop...

Dip!

DIVE INTO DELICIOUSNESS WITH YAMAS! WHIPPED FETA

To find out more visit yamasdairy.uk
or scan here for recipe inspiration

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