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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the September issue of *Speciality Food*, our biggest of the year and packed full of expert intel, inspiration and product recommendations to get your tills ringing and ideas flowing ahead of the upcoming festive season.

It's not only Christmas that the *Speciality Food* team is excited about right now – although we do have a host of seasonal features to get your teeth into, covering cheese and chutneys to puddings and drinks – we also can't wait for the imminent Speciality & Fine Food Fair and lunch! shows. Both are must-attend events on our calendar every year, and we share insider insight on both in this issue, from the brands to check out while you're on the show floor to the seminar sessions you don't want to miss.

We also shine the spotlight on some of the finest foodie destinations in the UK right now – from inspirational food halls (are you on the list?) to the tastiest cheese tourism spots.

Plus, we look at the increasing appetite for Asian cuisine in the British marketplace and highlight the products that are sure to fly off your shelves in 2025 and beyond; look into why seasonings are taking off in a big way; and share insight into the artisan cheese sector via our cheese news pages,

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Retail Crime Hits Crisis Levels

With thefts and violence reaching unprecedented levels, experts share advice on how to stay safe

New research has revealed that retail premises are the number one victim of physical crimes against businesses in the UK. According to Home Office data, 41.3% of retail and wholesale premises have been victims of crime, with 54% describing the financial impact as 'moderate' and 9% as 'severe'.

Get Licensed's UK Retail Crime Report names meat as the UK's most stolen item, with 85% of retailers reporting high theft rates, and alcohol – particularly high-end spirits and wines – is another frequently stolen category, accounting for over 22% of all retail thefts in 2022. The black market for meat is particularly prevalent in economically deprived areas, and the cost-of-living crisis is often cited as a major factor.

"Approaching three thefts per minute"

According to Get Licensed's report, cases of shoplifting are up 20% year-on-year and in 2024 hit crisis levels of 516,000 reported incidents. The research also showed that UK retailers logged over 20 million cases last year alone, with the issue costing British retailers £2.2 billion in stolen items, £1.8 billion in security and £200 million in insurance costs.

According to Gary Higgins, director of security and risk at DeterTech, "ONS data suggests the number of reported retail thefts is now almost twice that of two decades ago, approaching three thefts per minute across England and Wales in the year to March."

Andrew Goodacre, CEO of the British Independent Retailers Association (BIRA) states that official reporting is much less than the quoted figure because many retailers do not bother to report the crimes (mainly due to a lack of response). "Supermarkets and convenience stores are still the main targets, but our own recent research showed that 70% of independents now see regular incidents of theft and staff abuse," he said.

"Retail crime is becoming more brazen"

The aggressive nature of these incidents is worsening. "Retail crime is also becoming more brazen and more violent in nature, with the British Retail Consortium Crime Survey Report 2025 recording over 2,000 incidents of violence or abuse against retail workers, up from 1,300 the previous year," said Gary.

"We know that criminals are more aggressive these days, sometimes threatening shop owners with knives, etc. However, if it is possible to intervene and hold the criminals on-site, it is important to report the incident as soon as possible," suggests Andrew.

"Thieves are looking for easy targets"

For retailers, staying safe is a question of planning ahead, recommends Gary. "Thieves are looking for easy targets and relying on having time to escape well before police can respond. This means it is imperative for speciality food retail to focus on deterrents and on solutions that will help the police to identify and prosecute offenders after they've left the store.

"Small retailers who don't have large budgets for full 24/7 security teams in-store may feel at a loss of what they can do to protect from shoplifting, however there are a variety of cost-effective actions that can be taken."

"Deterrence is key"

The first line of defence against retail crime is making the crime more difficult and less attractive to commit. "Deterrence is key to crime prevention so focus on actions that will, from a criminal's perspective, increase the risk and reduce the available reward," says Gary. "For example, place high value items away from the entrance or lock them away. Equally, take advantage of and clearly signpost the use of technologies such as forensic marking and CCTV."

"For smaller shops it is important to be on the shop floor, speaking to customers," says Andrew. "These criminals do not like attention and would rather be left alone, and evidence suggest they would leave a shop rather than have to speak to someone. Also, many businesses are using dummy products on shelves, keeping the actual products behind the counter."

"Be aware that sites where shoplifting is an issue are often repeatedly targeted by the same offenders unless and until additional security measures are introduced," advises Gary.

"Combatting retail theft requires a collaborative approach"

While it can be easy to feel alone in a crisis, Robert recommends retailers collaborate with their support network and seek out information which could prove invaluable after a shoplifting event occurs. "Combatting retail theft and holding criminals to account requires a collaborative approach. It relies on retailers, police forces, policymakers, and technology providers all working together."

"In terms of support, I'd encourage retailers to check out Secured by Design who can provide valuable crime prevention information and advice," Gary advised. Building a picture for the local police force will inform future change. "I'd also encourage them to report all thefts to local police. While they can't immediately respond to every incident it really does help them to build up an accurate picture and put more prolific offenders behind bars."

"Retailers must report the crime and provide the evidence," said Andrew. "CCTV images are much better now. We know that there are lots of repeat/perennial offenders for shop theft. With evidence the police can take more meaningful action by applying for community banning orders. I cannot stress the need to report the crimes, as this is the only way to show the authorities how big a problem retail crime is."

"With advanced technology and forensic marking becoming more widespread, it is becoming easier for retailers to gather the evidence that the police can use to hold more individuals to account. In turn that will discourage more individuals from committing retail theft in the future and reduce the number of retail establishments being targeted in the first place," said Gary.





British Pick Your Own stars named as finalists in FRA awards

The shortlist for the Pick Your Own category in the Farm Retail Association Awards 2026, sponsored by Fieldfare, has been revealed.

The shortlisted farms impressed the judges with their passion for fresh, local produce, customer experiences and community engagement.

Judged by fellow farm retailers, the awards are designed to celebrate the very best in British farm retail and run in partnership with the FRA's 'More Than Food' campaign, which aims to highlight the value of farm shops, farmers markets and pick-your-own farms.

Emma Mosey, Chair of the Farm Retail Association, said, "This year's PYO finalists capture everything that's special about farm retail – seasonal produce, family-friendly experiences and a deep-rooted commitment to their communities. These aren't just places to buy fruit; they're places to make memories. As we continue to shine a light on the sector through our 'More Than Food' campaign and exciting new rebrand, these finalists remind us why local food matters more than ever."

The 2026 Pick Your Own finalists are:
- **Craigies Farm, Fife, Scotland**
- **Lathcoats Farm, Essex**
- **Manor Farm Fruits, Staffordshire**

Other award categories include:
· **Farmers Market of the Year** – entries now closed

Entries for the following award categories close 12th September 2025:
· **Associate Member of the Year**
· **Rising Star Award** – sponsored by Pleydell Smithyman Limited
· **Farm Shop Butchery of the Year**
· **Farm Cafe/Restaurant of the Year**
· **Small Farm Shop of the Year** – sponsored by Cress Co
· **Large Farm Shop of the Year** – sponsored by Fieldfare

Winners will be crowned at the FRA Awards Gala Dinner as part of the FRA's annual conference which will be held in Yorkshire in March 2026. All FRA members are eligible to enter the awards free of charge.

The appeal of seasonal and nostalgic flavours in food and drink

Kate Kehoe, Marketing Manager at FMCG Gurus shares insight from the FMCG Gurus' Flavours, Colours & Textures Survey 2025

Flavour has become a key way for food and drink brands to connect with consumers, especially when it taps into emotions, memories, or moments of comfort. FMCG Gurus' consumer insights show that 60% of consumers enjoy food and drink products featuring new, unusual, or exotic flavours. This appeal around novelty is particularly strong around key times of year, with 76% of these consumers saying they are more likely to seek out adventurous flavours during special occasions.

Seasonality plays a big role here. Limited-edition releases, holiday-themed treats, and festive flavours give consumers a reason to try something new while still feeling connected to the occasion. In fact, 38% of those who enjoy exotic flavours also say they are drawn specifically to festive flavours, highlighting the power of seasonal storytelling in product development.

However, while consumers are exploring bold new tastes, many are also drawn to the comfort of the familiar. FMCG Gurus' market research demonstrates that 57% of global consumers find traditional or nostalgic flavours appealing. These preferences are rooted in emotion and memory, for instance:

- 68% say nostalgic flavours remind them of simpler times
- 70% say they offer a sense of comfort and escapism
- 70% trust these flavours because they are known and familiar

This dual interest, in both the new and the nostalgic, reflects how consumers want to feel when they eat or drink. During seasonal moments, they are especially receptive to flavours that connect to tradition while still offering a fresh twist.

For brands, this presents a valuable opportunity: blending innovation with familiarity. A festive spin on a classic dessert or a modern take on a nostalgic drink can capture both curiosity and comfort. Flavors tied to seasons and memories are especially effective at engaging consumers.

In today's food and beverage landscape, flavour is more than just taste, it's about mood, memory, and experience. As consumers continue to seek both experience and reassurance in their choices, the most successful products will be those that deliver both.



> "The Chancellor must find a way to unlock household savings to increase consumer spending and bolster growth – more clarity on taxes ahead of the Budget may provide this, but this would be welcome ammunition to the opposition in Parliament"
>
> **PROFESSOR JOE NELLIS, ECONOMIC ADVISER AT MHA, ON FINANCIAL UNCERTAINTY LEADING SHOPPERS TO SAVE RATHER THAN SPEND AHEAD OF THE AUTUMN BUDGET**

Customer journey more vital than ever

Following Government statistics showing that eight pubs a week have ceased trading during the first half of 2025, Patrick Clover, founder of Stampede, suggests that a targeted marketing strategy is a must to future-proof customer-facing businesses.

"As businesses consider their sales and marketing strategy they also need to consider whether their entire customer journey is branded when communicating with customers. Creating a memorable, branded, customer journey that includes all the major digital points like guest Wi-Fi, social media, and targeted email as a minimum, supports growth. Putting these steps in place sets businesses up to deliver personalised marketing more effectively. The results of which can lead directly to more revenue and positive reviews online – all made possible by guest data and a strategic approach.

"There is no doubt we are all currently trading within a tough business environment. But trading without an effective, modern sales and marketing strategy is like sailing a ship without a rudder from one side of the world to another, hoping you're going to get there without problems. It's hard enough already to just set up a restaurant or bar, if you're going to go through all that hard work, it really is worth assessing whether your sales and marketing strategy truly matches the proposition you offer punters!"



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The 5 most 'faked' foods on the market

Five of the foods most commonly mislabelled, blended or bulked out with cheaper ingredients have been revealed in a new study by supply chain experts Authenticate.

Incidences of food fraud are on the rise, the organisation warns, adding that greater transparency is needed across the industry to prevent consumers buying potentially inferior products.

It is a practice, says Authenticate CEO Alex Walters, that harms both retailers and shoppers, undermining trust, damaging reputations, jeopardising health, and costing millions. The cost to the global economy, he adds, is somewhere in the region of $40 billion each year (£2 billion in the UK), with between 2016 and 2019, suspected EU cases of food fraud increased by 85% - a figure that experts predict will rise.

Investigations into tomato puree, seafood, honey, olive oil, and herbs and spices all showed concerning results, Alex explained.

Recently, for example, the BBC revealed some UK supermarkets were selling 'Italian' tomato puree, most likely made using Chinese tomatoes.

"The incident of Italian tomatoes being substituted for cheaper, less ethically produced varieties caused significant reputational and economic damage to supermarkets and eroded consumer trust," he said.

"For 9 in 10 jars of honey on UK supermarket shelves to have been found to have been bulked with sugar syrup reveals the extent of the problem," he added.

The adulteration of honey goes beyond Britain, said Lynne Ingram, chair of the Honey Authenticity Network UK and ambassador for the British Beekeepers Association.

"All over the world the genuine, real honey market is being saturated by very very cheap honey coming from a few particular countries." We import, she explained, around 52,000 tonnes of honey per year into the UK – 39,000 tonnes from China. "That's 77%. You'll find every little, if any British honey in most shops. Everything is imported and blended. It will say 'a blend of honey from non-EU countries' on the label. And the prices are so cheap. No real beekeeper producing real honey anywhere could make it for the prices we're seeing."

In seafood, multiple studies using DNA analysis revealed that 55% of tested products in UK markets, fishmongers and restaurants were mislabelled.

Olive oil fraud and mislabelling cases reached a record high in the EU in 2024, driven by the inflated price premium oils can command, and the availability of lower-grade, cheaper, blended oils.

And spices are being impacted too. EU studies found oregano to be the most at risk of being 'faked' with nearly half of samples tested at risk of being bulked with olive leaves.

This doesn't surprise Food of Gods founder Prerna Baruah who says retailers need to ask more questions about the supply chain of the spices they stock to ensure authenticity and quality. The widescale adulteration in the category is, she said, "absolutely unmissable".

This inspired Prerna to launch her own ethical, single-origin spice brand. "As a consumer myself, I was sick and tired of the kind of spices sold everywhere. The category still heavily relies on old and dusty spices on supermarket shelves!"

Using technology is key to reducing incidences of food fraud by mapping supply chains effectively, said Alex.

"Food fraudsters are taking advantage of increasingly complex supply chains and global events such as climate change, the pandemic and wars, which are driving up prices. Making increasingly complex food supply chains more open and observable is key for both supermarkets and shoppers' understanding of the entire journey of a food product."

Transparency involves those across the chain sharing information about ethical sourcing, sustainability, and compliance, Alex added.

What do fine food stores need to know?

Specialist retailers can mitigate the risk of food fraud impacting them by being suspicious of low prices (often when something seems too good to be true, it is), by choosing local and regional products where they can visit the makers and be assured of provenance and quality, and by only choosing to work with brands that can demonstrate full traceability throughout their supply chains.

The food fraud scandal is also an opportunity to demonstrate why independents remain a valuable part of the retail industry. Give your customers as much information as you can about what's going in their baskets, and why it's superior to what they might find elsewhere. Is your olive oil single origin from a certain organic farm in Spain? Where are the tomatoes in your jarred sauces and chopped tins grown? Where is your fresh seafood landed? Which flowers are the bees producing your honey foraging? All these details matter.

Absolutely essential is getting those producers in for tastings and demonstrations. Meeting the people behind the products, and making those connections helps build trust with brands, and within your business.

Calls to plan for tomorrow's workforce today

IGD's cross industry initiative Mmmake Your Mark is returning to attract talent and raise awareness about the diverse career opportunities available across the food system.

With the UK food system under increasing pressure due to labour shortages and skills gaps, which are already causing significant workforce challenges, IGD has announced that it is vital that businesses are proactive in recruiting tomorrow's workforce.

Attracting young talent and highlighting the variety and flexibility of roles within the industry is a key recommendation of the Mmmake Your Mark campaign, which aims to unite the industry, trade bodies and Government to get the message out.

Sarah Bradbury, CEO of IGD, said, "The workforce timebomb is something we simply cannot ignore as an industry. If we fail to take collective action, not only will it have a commercial impact for businesses, it also becomes a UK food security issue, affecting accessibility of food and inflation.

"We know from our own learning & development programmes that young people are largely unaware of the opportunities available and skills required in the food system, as well as the sense of purpose and impact a career in food and drink can offer. This issue is exacerbated by factors such as the decrease of entry into the industry through routes such as Saturday jobs. The Mmmake Your Mark campaign celebrates the incredible variety of people within the sector, promoting it as a space where individuals can find their purpose, explore new possibilities, and advance their careers. It also shines a spotlight on the industry's key role in addressing critical global challenges like healthy lifestyles, climate change, food security, and economic growth, which are of particular interest for young people. Crucially, the industry struggles to recruit technical, engineering and digital roles, as awareness of STEM based careers in food is low, and the campaign aims to help address that."

Healthy eating advice must "catch up" says new study

A study recently published by the Soil Association has stated that healthy eating advice put forward by Government must "catch up" with science and warn people against ultra-processed diets.

A new clinical trial led by researchers at UCL found that participants lost twice as much weight when eating minimally processed foods compared to ultra-processed foods (UPFs) despite following nutritionally matched diets, following a Soil Association investigation which found that the previous Government u-turned on plans to back minimally processed foods after lobbying from the food manufacturing sector. The Soil Association is running a campaign to call on the Government to make minimally processed foods accessible and affordable for all, and so far around 20,000 people have signed the petition.



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"Changing tastes"



OLIVER LLOYD
CONSULTANT

I went to Latitude Festival this summer in Suffolk with around 40,000 people, featuring headliners from Elbow, Snow Patrol, Sting, and Basement Jaxx. Now festivals are often painted as the territory of Gen Z, but at Latitude, the crowd was distinctly middle-aged, and the headlining of Sting, well into his 70s and looking no older than 50, reflected this. It has been running for almost 20 years and has an established following, so the food vendors know what will work on the ground.

In between sets, the numerous food stalls were pulling just as many crowds. The variety was staggering. I passed stands selling Japanese fried chicken, Mexican burritos that proudly claimed to be "banging", ostrich burgers, trays of vegan sushi, and furikake-dusted fries that were being carried away in droves. Stalls were offering Italian arancini, and two vendors were serving up fragrant Sri Lankan curries and hoppers, which were a favourite with my wife and me. To be fair, a lone pie seller was holding his own and attracted quite a following, but beyond that, the food offering was unapologetically international.

Adding to the mix was a fully functioning Co-op pop-up supermarket. It had all the essentials: £5.50 meal deals, iced coffee, fruit, sun cream, and even a live DJ in the aisles. However, even this reflected the trend towards evolving tastes: the only noodles they were selling came not from a traditional British brand, but from Japanese fast-food chain Itsu. Pallets of Itsu's chick'n ramen were stacked high and being snapped up, which says something about where the mainstream noodle market now sits.

This shift at a festival reflects something bigger in our national palate. The British public has grown used to food that is bold, colourful, and international. It is no longer enough to provide a burger and chips; today's foodies want a burger with wagyu beef, spiced mayo, and furikake fries (even if they don't quite know what furikake is yet). The festival field has become a reflection of the supermarket aisle.

One of the most striking examples of this shift is the rise of Japanese-inspired sweets. Matcha, mochi, and the now-famous strawberry sandwich, or sando, are becoming household names. M&S has launched its strawberry sando, while Ocado has reported a massive surge in sales of matcha products – up by more than 60% in the last year, with searches for matcha growing by nearly 100%. On TikTok, the hashtag #mochi has over 1.4 million posts, #matchacookies has 10,500, and videos of wobbly Japanese cheesecakes have been viewed hundreds of thousands of times. This is no longer a niche interest for food nerds; it is a mainstream craving.

What's driving this? Part of it is visual. Social media rewards food that looks fun and different, and Japanese sweets deliver precisely that. Part of it is health. Matcha comes with an aura of antioxidants, energy, and balance – positioned as a more innovative alternative to coffee. And part of it is simple novelty. After years of relatively safe desserts, consumers want something playful, light, and a little bit surprising.

Not only have we become braver with our plates, but our passports are feeling the impact, too. The UK's "bravecation" trend has taken off – 62 % of holidaymakers are now choosing destinations and activities that push them a little out of their comfort zone, whether that's zip-lining, sampling exotic local cuisine or climbing to breathtaking viewpoints. Meanwhile, the lure of authenticity and affordability is steering many away from crowded Med resorts towards lesser-known locations like Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Albania, where flights surged by 284 % last year. I, for one, am part of this, actually writing this piece from Kotor in Montenegro!

The broader message for all retailers is clear: British tastes are not standing still. From festival fields to supermarket shelves, the appetite for global flavours and textures is stronger than ever. The pie stall will always have a place, but increasingly, it is sitting alongside mochi ice cream, wagyu burgers, and strawberry sandos.

> "The British public has grown used to food that is bold, colourful, and international. It is no longer enough to provide a burger and chips; today's foodies want a burger with wagyu beef, spiced mayo, and furikake fries (even if they don't quite know what furikake is yet)"

One in three British retailers using AI technology daily

Data from OnePoll shows that the UK's small retailers are leading the AI revolution in a bid to save time and money, with a third using the technology daily.

The statistics, which polled 300 businesses, found 83% had adopted AI, with 33% per cent using it for marketing support, 26% for research tasks, and 23% for handling customer service enquiries.

During a typical day, those polled estimated they saved just over two hours through AI use – more than 13 hours per week.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) believe AI saves their business money (an average of £79 per day, adding up to thousands of pounds annual for those retailers using it daily).

Twenty-one per cent of shop owners who've implemented AI believe it has the potential to save struggling high streets, and for 19%, it has led to an increase in sales.

Kate Thompsett, owner of Happy & Glorious in Canterbury, said, "AI is a real time-saver for small business owners like me. Right now, it's letting me juggle a massive website overhaul at the same time as I ramp up my customer emails."

Kate adds that she mostly uses AI to 'sense-check' and proofread marketing copy. "But it's also brilliant for rewriting product descriptions, coming up with snappy email subject lines, and even telling me the best time to post on social media. This is helping Happy & Glorious to grow at an otherwise challenging time and I'm sure it will boost future sales."

However, not all independent retailers are as convinced by the power of AI.

According to research commissioned by global wholesale marketplace Faire, one in 10 small businesses have 'no interest' in adopting AI - with a lack of understanding, worries over cost, and lack of trust among the biggest reasons.

One in 10 don't really understand the benefits of it, and the same number consider its use as 'cheating'. Others fear becoming too dependent on AI (14 per cent) and worry it lacks the 'personal touch' (18 per cent).

Charlotte Broadbent, UK general manager at Faire, said, "Despite tough economic conditions, many of the independent retailers we work with are embracing AI to save time, cut costs, and compete with bigger retailers. What's exciting is that technology - and particularly some of the AI driven tools we offer our retailers - are helping to level the playing field, giving small businesses access to the same efficiencies and insights as much larger competitors."

Charlotte added Faire is seeing some resistance to AI amongst shop owners who don't fully understand or trust the technology, or worry about losing many of the things that make independents so unique and important to their communities. "Of course, not every shop is there yet. Some are still wary, and that's understandable because this tech is new. But the ones leaning in are showing how adaptable and innovative small businesses can be. I'm confident we'll see even more creative uses of AI that allow retailers and small business owners to focus on what they do best: curating brilliant products and creating memorable customer experiences."

The push to adopt AI tools comes amid the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and the continued struggles facing high streets. Nearly half (41%) of small retailers say rising business costs are their biggest challenge, followed by reduced consumer spending (39%) and intense competition from eCommerce giants and major retail chains (31%).

In response, a third (33%) are turning to AI to save time and automate manual tasks. Others see it as a way to boost overall efficiency (30%) and enhance customer engagement (24 per cent).

Interestingly, 15% see AI as a way to future-proof their business against industry changes and avoid falling behind other retailers - both small and large. The data also shows 74% of independent retailers want more support and advice on the benefits of this tech.

While 48% are worried they might get left behind if they don't adopt AI soon.



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THE UK FOOD & DRINK SHOWS

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“Unfairness and affordability” to be addressed following new farm tax report, says NFU



A new report by CenTax states that reform in the family farm tax could be better targeted to protect working farms, and has proposed a number of amendments.

Since last year's Budget the NFU has raised concerns regarding the ability of the current policy to remove the incentive to shelter wealth in farmland, protect family farms or generate as much revenue as it should – and has also stressed the burden it places on elderly farmers.

NFU President Tom Bradshaw said, “We welcome this detailed report by CenTax which recognises that working farms will be disproportionately affected by this tax. This is not a fair and balanced approach to reform and does little to counter those who seek to shelter wealth from inheritance tax by simply investing in farmland.

“There are interesting adjustments within the report that appear to mitigate the impacts on the most vulnerable in our community and enable farms to invest in the future of food production with greater confidence.

“We think this new independent analysis presents a positive and timely opportunity ahead of the Finance Bill for fresh conversations with government and officials that would allow us all to work together to address issues of fairness and affordability within the proposals. The NFU urges government to grasp this opportunity.”



British produce experiences boost thanks to foodservice

The UK’s leading provider of fresh produce to the foodservice sector, Fresh Direct, has reported a jump in British sales as an increasing number of operators look to support domestic producers.

The business has experienced an almost 10% boost in sales of British-sourced produce in the past 12 months, with some categories seeing an increase of more than a quarter, and says that the increase is due to the rise of premiumisation.

British berries and homegrown producers such as Isle of Wight tomatoes are experiencing particularly strong sales, as are businesses such as Grow Up Farms which are utilising innovative farming methods.

Andy Pembroke, managing director of Fresh Direct, said, “For the past three years, we have been running a campaign to encourage customers to increase the amount of British produce on the menu. As well as reflecting consumer demand, it supports British farmers and, best of all, capitalises on the fantastic seasonal quality of UK produce. We continue to provide more options to meet increasing customer demand by constantly adding new British produce lines.”

“The era of predictable supply chains is fading”

It’s vital that the British food industry recognises the differences between biological supply shocks and longer-term environmental decline for future success, say Katy Gallagher, head of consumer products and Anisha Hebbar, senior consultant at 4C Associates.

The tripling of cocoa costs and 20% surge in UK egg prices as a result of biological supply shocks caused a tide of concern for brands, retailers and consumers, but these experts state that there are ways to build resilience:

1. Reassess high-dependency ingredients: Don’t just focus on cost. Consider the long-term availability and sustainability of critical inputs and commodities. Identify inputs from your supply chain with high-risk dependencies (e.g. climate-related) and evaluate potential alternatives.

2. Enhance forecasting and risk modelling: Invest in advanced forecasting, whether it be through adopting new tools or leveraging existing systems to manage volatility. With internal alignment across supply chain, procurement and operations, organisations can act faster and more cohesively when disruptions occur.

3. Balance supplier diversification: A broad supplier base reduces exposure - but resilience also comes from strong supplier relationships. Trusted suppliers are more likely to flag risks early or prioritise your business in times of constraint. It’s not about putting fewer eggs in one basket, but choosing the right basket.

4. Rethink product or recipe strategy: Resilience also means reviewing product formulation and core inputs. Are there ways to reduce reliance on at-risk ingredients through reformulation or innovation? This requires collaboration across R&D, procurement, and commercial teams and a shift from reactive cost control measures to longer-term planning.

“The era of predictable supply chains is fading. The biological shocks and environmental pressures are no longer rare events but features of a new, more volatile landscape. The greatest risk lies in inaction, as consumer trust and brand loyalty don't wait for supply chains to recover. Waiting to react is no longer a viable strategy.”





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SAY NO TO FAKE NEWS. HERE'S THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE HEADLINES:

DEFRA (2025) *ORGANIC FARMING STATISTICS 2024: UNITED KINGDOM*. DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD & RURAL AFFAIRS, 8 MAY. | BENGTSSON, J., AHNSTRÖM, J. AND WEIBULL, A-C. (2005) *'THE EFFECTS OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ON BIODIVERSITY AND ABUNDANCE: A META-ANALYSIS'*, JOURNAL OF APPLIED ECOLOGY | SOIL ASSOCIATION ORGANIC STANDARDS FOR GREAT BRITAIN, VERSION 1.6 | GHABBOUR, E.A., ET AL. (2017) *'NATIONAL COMPARISON OF THE TOTAL AND SEQUESTERED ORGANIC MATTER CONTENTS OF CONVENTIONAL AND ORGANIC FARM SOILS'*, ADVANCES IN AGRONOMY | HENNERON, L., ET AL (2015) *'FOURTEEN YEARS OF EVIDENCE FOR POSITIVE EFFECTS OF CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE AND ORGANIC FARMING ON SOIL LIFE'*, AGRICULTURE, ECOSYSTEMS & ENVIRONMENT | COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING (2012) *FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES AND ANIMAL WELFARE: HOW THE STANDARDS COMPARE* (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY) | POUX, X., AUBERT, P.-M. (2018). *AN AGROECOLOGICAL EUROPE IN 2050: MULTIFUNCTIONAL AGRICULTURE FOR HEALTHY EATING. FINDINGS FROM THE TEN YEARS FOR AGROECOLOGY (TYFA) MODELLING EXERCISE*, IDDRI-ASCA | FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN FAO) *ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE*, INTERDEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE | POUX, X., AUBERT, P.-M. (2019) *AGROECOLOGY AND CARBON NEUTRALITY IN EUROPE BY 2050: WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?* IDDRI

10 ways to succeed in foodservice

The experts at Jellybean Creative share their advice on how to appeal to and retain customers in a foodservice setting

Whether you are opening a café, deli, farm shop or specialist foodservice outlet, success comes from more than just offering great products. It's about building a brand people connect with, creating memorable experiences and staying adaptable in a fast-moving market. Here are 10 proven ways to set yourself up for long-term success.

1 BUILD A BRAND PEOPLE WANT TO BELONG TO

You are not just selling food and drink - you are creating a community. Give your brand a clear personality with a name, look and feel that reflects your values. Whether you champion sustainability, artisan produce, local sourcing or a welcoming atmosphere, make sure this is clear in everything from your logo and website to your packaging and décor.

2 OPEN WITH A BUZZ

Make your launch an event. Host a soft opening for locals, neighbouring businesses, influencers and journalists, offering samples or small freebies. A launch event gives people a reason to try you and generates valuable content. Encourage attendees to post on social media and offer a return -visit voucher when they tag you. The more shares, the more buzz.

3 GET ON THE MAP – LITERALLY

Set up and optimise your Google Business Profile so customers can find you when searching for "food near me" or similar. Include professional photos, opening hours and a concise but appealing bio. Add details such as whether you are dog or pushchair friendly, offer parking or provide home delivery. This is a free tool that can make a big difference to visibility.

4 SHOW YOUR FACE ON SOCIAL

Platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook are your digital shop window. Share behind-the-scenes content, product preparation, staff stories and your best sellers. Keep it authentic and human. Customers respond to genuine stories rather than just polished pictures. A time-lapse of your morning prep or a poll about which new flavour to launch can encourage interaction and loyalty.

5 START COLLECTING CUSTOMER DETAILS EARLY

Encourage people to join your mailing list from day one with a small reward such as a free treat or discount. Make sign-up easy using a QR code. Use email or WhatsApp updates to keep them coming back with loyalty offers, seasonal products and invitations to special events.

6 CREATE A PHOTO-WORTHY SPOT

Design a corner or display in your space that customers will want to photograph and share. Clearly showcase your brand name or social tag so people know how to credit you. A monthly prize draw for those who post and tag you can encourage even more sharing.

7 REWARD LOYALTY CREATIVELY

Move beyond the basic stamp card. Digital loyalty apps, surprise freebies or exclusive previews for regular customers can make people feel valued. Empower your staff to offer complimentary items occasionally to brighten a customer's day.

8 ENGAGE WITH THE PRESS

Send concise press releases to local media, lifestyle bloggers and foodie influencers. Include high-quality images and a personal note about your story and what makes you unique. Offering journalists and influencers an in-person visit, and a complimentary tasting can help secure coverage.

9 COLLABORATE WITH OTHER LOCAL BUSINESSES

Partnerships help you reach new audiences. Work with nearby producers, makers or creatives to host joint events. Perhaps tasting evenings with a local vineyard, bread-making workshops with an artisan baker or seasonal craft sessions. Collaboration strengthens community ties and builds your reputation.

10 LISTEN, LEARN AND ADAPT

Stay tuned to what customers love, what they don't and what they wish you offered. Whether it's private hire, seasonal hampers or new product ranges, responding to demand builds loyalty faster than any advertising campaign. Regular feedback will help you stay relevant and competitive.

Inflation hitting shoppers' budgets

Inflation is higher than forecast, with annualised inflation coming in at 3.8%, up from 3.6% in June and higher the 3.7% predicted.

According to Nicholas Hyett, investment manager at Wealth Club, summer 2025 has been an especially expensive one, with rising air fares and higher restaurant and hotel costs making it a costly season for consumers. However, "more concerning from a social and economic perspective is the continued rise in food prices, up 4.5% year-on-year and the fourth consecutive increase in the annual rate," he said. "Coming on top of the run-away food price inflation seen in 2022 and 2023 that will be very painful for consumers. Rising food and beverage prices together with rising housing costs will be decimating disposable incomes."

Latest shopping trends

Recent intel from Nielsen IQ shows that small, convenient shops are on the rise.

With shoppers looking for a more budget friendly, quick meal solutions, 'Dinner for Tonight' [NIQ Homescan Shopping Missions Q2 2025] shopping missions are increasing, with one in five shopping trips consisting of quick, small baskets of fresh food, chilled meat and fruit and vegetables. Also amongst the fresh and ambient categories in growth were dried vegetables and pulses (+28%), fresh pastry and dough (+15%) and packaged grocery (+4.2%). Frozen fruit also saw strong demand, growing (+13.2%) in value and in units (+7.0%) as shoppers turned to versatile, waste-free options for smoothies, crumbles and breakfast pots [NIQ Scantrack GB (Total Coverage)].







ANOTHER DAY AT THE *Office*

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Welsh Government project delivers £676 million boost to food and drink industry

A project that provides technical support to Welsh food and drink manufacturers has delivered an impact worth over £676 million since its launch in 2016.

For the past decade, the Welsh Government-funded Project HELIX has been a key support programme for the Welsh food and drink industry and has been delivered by Food Centre Wales in Ceredigion, Food Technology Centre in Anglesey, and ZERO2FIVE Food Industry Centre at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Support on offer has included assistance with food safety certification scheme compliance, improving process efficiencies and innovative new product development.

The Project HELIX Annual Report 2024-2025 – which focuses on the period 1st July 2023-31st Marh 2025 – has recently been released, and highlights the following support it has provided the food and drink sector during this time:

• Delivery of over £303 million impact to the Welsh food and drink industry
• Support for the creation of 188 jobs and safeguarded a further 6131
• Helping companies to develop 533 new products and gain 149 third-party certifications
• Working with 199 companies, including 103 start-ups

As a result of the project's success, further funding has been announced by The Welsh Government and it has been relaunched as the HELIX Programme.

As a result of the success of Project HELIX, the Welsh Government has announced further funding for the project, which has relaunched as the HELIX Programme. As part of the HELIX Programme relaunch, AberInnovation in Ceredigion will provide pan-Wales academic research support.

Huw Irranca-Davies, deputy first minister with responsibility for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, said, "The remarkable £676 million impact delivered by Project HELIX demonstrates how strategic government investment can transform an industry. This initiative has been a cornerstone of our support for Welsh food and drink manufacturers, creating jobs, driving innovation, and helping businesses thrive in competitive markets. The success stories from companies like Pembrokeshire Gold, Llanfairpwll Distillery, and Mario's Ice Cream highlight the practical benefits this technical support brings to businesses of all sizes across Wales.

"I'm delighted to announce continued funding through the HELIX Programme, which will build on this success by bringing together industry, government and academia to support sustainable growth in one of Wales' most important sectors. This renewed commitment reflects our confidence in Welsh food and drink producers and our determination to see them continue to innovate, expand, and showcase Welsh quality on the global stage."

Professor David Lloyd, on behalf of the HELIX Programme, said, "The impact of Project HELIX both financially and in terms of employment, is a testament to the effectiveness of the knowledge that has been shared between industry, government and academia through the project.

"With the launch of the HELIX Programme, the Welsh Government has further demonstrated its commitment to encouraging sustainable growth in the Welsh food and drink foundation sector through a strong emphasis on productivity improvement, innovation and attaining industry leading standards."

> "The Welsh Government has further demonstrated its commitment to encouraging sustainable growth in Welsh food and drink"

Plant Based World Expo Europe 2025 enters new era

Taking place 26th-27th November at Excel London, Plant Based World Expo Europe is the premier destination for retail and foodservice buyers to uncover the latest in plant-based innovation.



For the 2025 edition of the show, Plant Based World Expo Europe will be co-located with the European Pizza Show – combining two vibrant food sectors under one roof, and responding to the demand for plant-based options from pizza and foodservice operators.

The update will see a combined audience of over 14,000 attendees and offer unparalleled opportunities for networking, product discovery and business development.

With this year's show boasting a dynamic exhibition floor featuring cutting-edge plant-based solutions from leading and emerging brands, live cooking demos and tasting opportunities, curated networking and matchmaking and a topical educational programme, it is not to be missed.

2025's event is the first under the ownership of Emerald Expositions, a global leader in B2B trade shows which brings a long-term dedication to the plant-based industry.

To find out more and get your pass to attend, visit plantbasedworldeurope.com





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Consumer confidence dwindles in the UK

Rising inflation and economic uncertainty are having a huge impact on UK shoppers.

Print, digital and social news channels have been filled with doom and gloom over the past few weeks, as financial analysts and economic experts deliver their predictions for this September's Autumn Budget.

Capital Gains tax on householders, changing to IHT, and other measures the Treasury could be considering, have spooked consumers, experts say, with optimistic spending seen in the beginning of the summer, in response to the UK's bright, warm weather, dipping.

Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the British Retail Consortium (BRC) said, "While consumer confidence in the economy crept up this month, it remains 24 points lower than a year ago, with older generations seeing the biggest falls. Full-time workers were far more optimistic than those working part-time, unemployed, or retirees, reflecting that they were also the only group who expected their financial position to improve in the next three months. With prices rising, and food inflation predicted to hit 6% by the end of the year, households are expected to spend more on retail goods in the coming months, with groceries showing the biggest increase."

Helen said rising food inflation will make it increasing harder to lift consumer confidence "out of the doldrums".

"Belief in the economy has stayed stubbornly below -30 for six of the last seven months, a far cry from the net positive sentiment in July 2024. Consumers see rising prices, gap-toothed high streets, and reports of large businesses falling into administration. Much rides on the Chancellor's plans for retail, hospitality and leisure, and only a significant reduction in the business rates burden can bring about the levels of investment needed to reinvigorate Britain's high streets and town centres."

The latest CPI inflation figures show headline inflation rising to 3.8%, and food inflation rising to 4.9%, with households feeling the pinch as the cost of their weekly shop climbs.

Kris Hamer, director of insight at the BRC, said, "The Bank of England has been clear that government policies, which have driven up the costs of employment, are fuelling price rises at the till, while poor harvests and global instability have also added further cost pressures. There was some limited relief for consumers as clothing and footwear inflation remained subdued while certain everyday food items such as olive oil, butter and cheese did fall in price on the month."

Retailers, Kris added, have been doing everything in their power to prevent price rises, but the swathe of costs they now face has left them no room to manoeuvre.

"The Chancellor must avoid burdening the industry with even more taxes this autumn. Instead, she has an opportunity to encourage much needed investment in our high streets by ensuring the planned reforms to business rates offer a significant reduction for retail properties, and leave no shop paying more."

All eyes are now on the outcome of the budget and the impact it will have on consumers, retailers and the wider economy.

> "The Chancellor must avoid burdening the industry with even more taxes this Autumn"

Food & Drink Federation launches member toolkits to combat emissions

The FDF has released details of the next phase of its Ambition 2030 initiative – including aims to help halve emissions across the agri-food supply chain in the next five years – and announced the launch of five member toolkits which cover each strategic pillar of the Ambition 2030 programme.

As part of its Ambition 2030 initiative (which aims to halve emissions across the entire agri-food supply chain by 2030), The Food and Drink Federation (FDF) has announced the next phase of its plans.

Food consumption accounts for more than a fifth of the UK's total carbon emissions. At the same time, half of the UK's Plastic Pacts targets are likely to not be met, and 18% of food waste occurs during manufacturing. Together these details mean the stakes are high when it come to sustainability in Britain's food and drink industry.

The organisation's five new member toolkits cover every strategic pillar of its Ambition 2030 programme – Net Zero, Nature Restoration, Sustainable Commodities, Food Waste and Packaging.

Each toolkit has been designed to work for businesses at any stage of their sustainability journey, whether they're just at the start, or are looking to push themselves further.

The kits provide practical steps, advice and guidance, including detailed insights into the current sustainability policy landscape, information about the latest frameworks and standards for manufacturers, priority areas for businesses to action upon, and information on FDF activities that can help members achieve their own green ambitions.

Each toolkit also includes resources businesses need to undertake self-assessments, helping them to understand their current environmental impact, and potential areas for improvement. That could be engaging with industry initiatives to help build sustainability through supply chains, promoting regenerative farming, or standardising carbon reporting.

Emma Piercy, head of climate change and energy policy at the FDF, said, "Achieving our sector's ambitious net zero and nature targets will take proactivity and collaboration, with each business recognising the part they have to play in tackling critical climate issues.

"We recognised that the sustainability policy landscape is complex, and that food and drink manufacturers will all be at different stages in their sustainability journeys, that's why we've created these new Ambition 2030 toolkits, giving businesses the support and guidance they need to contribute to our collective action on climate progress towards their sustainability goals."

Ambition 2030 is the flagship sustainability strategy for UK food and drink manufacturers, setting out the sector's role in tackling climate change, outlining how each business can contribute towards a more sustainable future for the industry, while also setting out a vision for collaborations between manufacturers and policy makers.

It seeks to reduce carbon emissions across the agrifood supply chain in Britain by 50% by 2030, improve habitats in the face of nature crisis, address supply chains for commodities which are contributing to deforestation, halve per capita food waste, and to contribute towards a world class packaging recycling system in Britain. Progress reports will be published each year, measuring success and delivering case studies so members can see change in action.





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lunch! 2025

This September, lunch! - the national food-to-go, retail, and coffee shop event - makes its highly anticipated return to Excel London on 24th-25th September

Renowned for showcasing cutting-edge innovation and featuring top-tier industry speakers, the event continues to be a key destination for discovering what's new and next in the food and drink sector.



We spoke with event director, Katie Tyler to get an exclusive preview of what's in store at this must-attend gathering for food and beverage professionals.

WHAT KINDS OF BUSINESSES OR PROFESSIONALS SHOULD ATTEND LUNCH! AND WHAT CAN THEY EXPECT TO SEE?

lunch! consistently brings together senior decision-makers from across the UK and even further afield. Every year, we see a fantastic mix - people from big-name and up-and-coming food-to-go chains, supermarkets, convenience, contract caterers, cafés, coffee shops, travel caterers, attractions, wholesalers, distributors, plus high-quality independents across the sector too. You'll find everyone from Pret and Costa Coffee to Sainsbury's, Selfridges, bp, and Tesco on the attendee list – a real who's who of the industry.

I think one of the biggest reasons we attract such high-profile names is because lunch! brings together the latest innovations, trend-setting products, and exciting new launches across the food-to-go sector. There's an incredible range of exhibitors covering everything from coffee, snacks, and crisps to tech, EPOS systems, ordering solutions, and sustainable equipment – you name it. It's a one-stop shop for anyone looking to streamline or elevate their business. Not to mention, lunch! is co-located with the National Restaurant, Pub & Bar Show, so there's even more products for operators and food-to-go buyers to explore.

The speaker line-up is always a major draw – we've had some of the biggest names in the industry, and this year's programme is shaping up to be just as impressive. Make sure to explore the Keynote Programme, which is online now! And then there's the Innovation Challenge, which is always a crowd favourite. Visitors love watching brands pitch their latest ideas live on stage in front of a panel of industry experts. These products have been launched in the last 12 months, so it's inspiring, competitive, and a real highlight of the show.

WHAT KEY TRENDS OR INNOVATIONS ARE YOU SEEING IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SPACE THIS YEAR?

We're seeing exciting innovation in food and beverage this year. Functional snacks are putting a healthy spin on classic favourites, with high-protein, grab-and-go options leading the way. The beverage space is booming too – think elevated teas, palatable mushroom coffees, and vitamin-packed drinks. Global flavours are on the rise, especially those focused on authenticity and clean ingredients. And one fun trend to watch: pistachio everything. It's having a major moment in 2025.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT ANY STANDOUT OR FIRST-TIME EXHIBITORS?

This year our exhibitors are really stepping up their game, you'll see some amazing stand designs and get to taste, touch and smell hundreds of innovative products. Oatly are sponsoring our central cafe with some clever ideas on how oat milk can be versatile. We also have itsu Grocery with us for the first time showcasing their range of new products, Holie's with their new healthy cereal as well as returning exhibitors Vita Coco, Kellanova, Deli Lites Ireland, Pip & Nut, Twinings, Simply Lunch, La Lorraine, Flexeserve and Yeo Valley. The Start-Up Zone will see brand new companies showcasing protein bars, functional drinks, bread, confectionary and much more.

ARE THERE ANY NOTABLE SPEAKERS OR PANELS THAT ATTENDEES SHOULD BE EXCITED ABOUT?

We haven't revealed the whole speaker programme yet, but I can say our headliners are some of the industry's most influential voices – including Marta Pogroszewska, NED, Bread Holdings Limited, (the parent company of GAIL's); Julian Metcalfe OBE, Founder & Group CEO of itsu and Co-Founder of Pret; and Caroline Ottoy, Managing Director of WatchHouse. They will be talking about everything, from sustainability and digital transformation to shifting consumer behaviours, covering the most pressing trends shaping the industry.

Without giving away too much, other names to join the line-up include Pano Christou, CEO, Pret A Manger; Andy Naylor, CEO of Tortilla; Luke Shaughnessy, Regional Operations Director of Costa Coffee; Jon Lake, Managing Director of Chopstix; James Flett, Marketing Director, Caffè Nero and William Gordon-Harris, CEO of Knoops.

HOW HAS THE EVENT HELPED SHAPE OR SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF EMERGING FOOD BRANDS?

lunch! has played a key role in supporting the growth of emerging food brands. Many companies have started their journey in the show's dedicated Start Up Zone – designed specifically for start-ups - and over time have scaled up to larger stands, becoming standout players and even disruptors in the industry.

Visitors come actively seeking new, exciting concepts, making it the perfect launchpad for showcasing what your brand is all about. It's not just about exposure to buyers and retailers – the show also offers invaluable opportunities to connect with fellow founders, get advice, share challenges, and build partnerships. It's a space where up-and-coming brands can grow not only their reach but also their confidence, learning from others who have walked the same path. lunch! is more than an event – it's a springboard for the next generation of food, drink, tech and equipment. We can't wait to see you all there in September!

lunch! will co-locate with The National Restaurant, Pub & Bar Show. Register for a FREE trade ticket at lunchshow.co.uk.

NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: ExCeL London
WHEN: 24th-25th September 2025
WEB: lunchshow.co.uk



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PRODUCT NEWS

Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

New passata unveiled by Terra Rossa

Award-winning specialist of Arabian delicacies, Terra Rossa, has announced the release of a new addition to its range of handmade sauces.

Zaatar Passata is made using fresh tomatoes, garlic, onions, Palestinian Zaatar thyme mix and Jordanian extra virgin olive oil, and is ready to eat and impressively versatile.

Similar to a salsa, this sauce adds flavour and colour to any hot or cold dish such as soups and stews, pasta and pizza, or as a condiment for barbecued meat. Traditionally it would be mixed with olive oil and scooped with bread.



terra-rossa.com

Two health-boosting launches from Biona

Biona has announced the arrival or two new organic products which are set to delight health-concious consumers.

Their new Wheat Matcha Tagliatelle Nests are a combination of premium organic durum wheat and antioxidant-rich matcha, while the Black Seed Oil is a cold-pressed oil made from certified black cumin seeds and is rich in Omega 6 and 9 which can be consumed as a supplement or added to meals.

Carmen Ferguson, brand manager at Biona's parent company Windmill Organics, said, "Both these new additions to our range will hit the spot for health-conscious foodies who are looking for something a bit different. The current growth in popularity of matcha is well known, with sales up 91% in the first quarter of 2025, and a growing number of consumers enjoying its benefits of mental clarity and a slow, healthy release of energy, so bringing this to the pasta category should be well-received."



biona.co.uk

Tracklements reveals festive gift packs

Wiltshire-based condiment brand Tracklements has launched a new range of gift packs perfect for the upcoming festive season.

The vegetarian and gluten-free 12 Days of Tracklements gift pack includes miniature jars of Sweet Mustard Ketchup, Proper Tomato Ketchup, Robust Wholegrain Mustard, Caramelised Onion Marmalade, Rich & Creamy Mayonnaise, Tomato & Chilli Chutney, Apricot & Ginger Chutney, Strong English Mustard, Quintessential Brown Sauce, Strong Horseradish Cream, Sticky Fig Relish and Chilli & Red Pepper Relish.

The new Tracklements Christmas Cracker is suitable for vegans and gluten-free, and contains jars of Christmas Spice Chutney, Cranberry, Port & Orange Sauce and Sticky Fig Relish. The new Tracklements Farmers Market Gift Pack, which is also suitable for vegans and gluten-free, contains Green Tomato Chutney, Particularly British Piccalilli and Tomato & Chilli Chutney.



Liz Cuff, marketing director, said, "The festive season is ideal for getting new shoppers to try exciting products for year-round sales, so we're thrilled to launch the Christmas Cracker, the Farmer's Market Gift Pack and our 12 Days of Tracklements to do just this. All offer a super opportunity for Tracklements fans to introduce friends and family to their favourite, best-tasting condiments. The perfect stocking filler for foodies, the gorgeous packaging is perfect for display front and centre for easy upsells."

tracklements.co.uk

New launch from FATSO

Chocolate disruptor brand FATSO has added to its range of indulgent bars with the launch of Drunk'n Monkey.

The new bar brings together crisped banana chips, rum and sea salt in the brand's signature dark Colombian chocolate.

Ella McKay, co-founder, said, "There's no monkeying around with this flavour! We've carefully combined a tropical trio of ingredients and covered it in our delicious single-origin dark chunky chocolate. The outcome is both tasty and tipsy! As always, we continue on our mission to prove that dark chocolate doesn't have to be all seriousness and restraint and we're so excited to be bringing another new flavour into the FATSO fold."



sofatso.com

The Garlic Farm creates all-organic Asian range

As part of its commitment to transitioning all of its products to organic following the certification of its farmland as organic in 2023, The Garlic Farm has announced that its new Asian range is fully organic.

Infused with black garlic, made by heat-ageing garlic over several weeks, the new products combine iconic Asian flavours with distinctly sweet and umami notes from the garlic. The range consists of Tamari Soy Sauce with Black Garlic, delicious mixed into stir fries or used as a dipping sauce; Hoisin Sauce with Black Garlic, perfect as a glaze for meat or as a dipping sauce; and Teriyaki Sauce with Black Garlic, a classic sauce with a black garlic twist and ideal for marinating chicken or seafood.

Barnes Edwards, director, said, "This collection of store cupboard ingredients responds to the recent rise of Pan-Asian and Asian-Fusion food in restaurants and markets. We hope to help our retailers expand their organic offerings and give customers more choice, as well as peace of mind that our products are made with consideration for environmental impact."



thegarlicfarm.co.uk



Black Bee Honey releases latest seasonal jar



B Corp-certified honey producer Black Bee Honey have announced the return of its award-winning and 100% natural British Autumn Heather Honey.

Bold, aromatic and with a thick texture and notes of treacle, the honey is known as British Manuka and is sourced from hives located on the moors of North Yorkshire and Scotland in late summer where bees forage on Ling Heather.

The resulting dark coloured honey is distinctive and robust, and delicious served alone or used in baking.

blackbeehoney.com

NutraTea expands functional tea range

The award-winning B-Corp tea brand is launching two new herbal blends as a response to growing customer demand for wellness-boosting drinks inspired by ancient wisdom.

Moringa Leaf & Ashwaganda is designed to reduce stress, improve sleep, support cognative function and strengthen immunity, while Yerba Mate & Gotu Kola is a vibrant South American-inspired blend which offers enhanced focus and mental clarity.

All teas in NutraTea's range contain 100% active, high quality herbal ingredients with no flavourings or fillers.

Each box contains 20 plastic-free biodegradable tea bags which are designed to be used two or three times without compromising on flavour of efficacy.



Anish Patel, co-founder of NutraTea, said, "The functional tea trend is gaining momentum, especially here in the UK where consumers' drinking habits are continuing to pivot away from caffeine and alcohol. Now is the time to lean in and listen to what customers are researching and reaching for so it felt right to further extend the range with these two new trending blends."

nutratea.co.uk

"Less smoky" mezcal enters UK market



The award-winning spirit Rosaluna has arrived in the UK, offering discerning drinkers the opportunity to enjoy mezcal with less overpowering notes of smoke.

The single estate 40% agave spirit is certified organic and non-GMO, and distilled by a sixth-generation family-run distillery in Oaxaca, Mexico which has a strong reputation for eco-friendly practices.

David Hood, general manager at Spirit Cartel, UK distributor of Rosaluna, said, "Rosaluna's less smoky profile results in a mezcal with excellent mixability and versatility across a wide range of recipes. Mezcal's on the rise in the UK, but the markets getting crowded with 'samey' liquids, so we're confident of success for this subtly different and planet-friendly mezcal."

mezcalrosaluna.com

Booja-Booja launches four new products



Multi award-winning chocolate maker Booja-Booja has unveiled the four new products joining its roster this autumn.

The brand has created its first ever dairy-free hot chocolate using simple organic ingredients for a smooth and sophisticated sip. It is dairy-free, gluten-free and vegan, and can be used with any type of milk.

The Chocolate Wonders range has been refreshed with the release of Fudgie Brownie Chocolate Wonders, bites of chewy chocolate brownie rolled in dark chocolate flakes; and Orange Scrunch Chocolate Wonders, orange ganache combined with crunchy honeycomb.

A new format truffle box has also been created – the Winter Special Eight Truffle Box, which brings together Cherry Bakewell Chocolate Truffles, previously only found in Booja-Booja truffle selections, and Hazelnut Crunch Chocolate Truffles. The new truffle box and Orange Scrunch Chocolate Wonders will be exclusively available during autumn and winter.

Matt Gilding, MD, said of the hot chocolate, "Our hot chocolate is smooth, rich and comforting, so whether you're looking for an indulgent dairy free option you know you can trust, or a simply sensational, premium hot chocolate drink, we've got you covered.

Louise Collins, marketing communications manager, said of the new releases, "Launching four new products is so exciting as each one brings a delicious new dimension to our growing range of free from delights. We just know that scrumptious new Fudgie Brownie Chocolate Wonders are going to bring lots of smiles. And we're delighted to be growing our seasonal Winter Special ranged with festive Orange Scrunch Chocolate Wonders and our new two-flavour Eight Truffle Box which really is a double bill of deliciousness!"

boojabooja.com

Chimac extends marinade offer

Korean-inspired marinade producer Chimac has released three new marinades set to impress lovers of Asian cuisine, whether they eat meat or follow vegetarian or plant-based diets.

Korean Stir Fry Marinade is a blend of gochujang, garlic, gingers and soy that brings instant depth to a dish; Sriracha Caramel Glaze transforms vegetables and roast ham; and Korean BBQ Wings Marinade is rich, smoky and sticky with its combination of soy, garlic, sesame and a touch of sweetness. All items in the range are made with no artificial preservatives and created for versatility.

Sofie Rooney, co-founder, said, "We wanted to create marinades that make it effortless to bring bold, Korean-inspired flavour to any meal, whether you're barbecuing, stir-frying, or just making weeknight dinners exciting."

chimac.ie









EXPLORE ASIAN FLAVOURS, **ORGANICALLY**

The Garlic Farm's new Asian range is a true innovation, combining trending tastes with fully organic credentials

With over 50 years of experience growing garlic at the family farm on the Isle of Wight, the team behind The Garlic Farm is truly passionate about this most versatile ingredient – bringing a varied mix of garlic-inspired products and ingredients to discerning food lovers, and satisfying the growing appetite for food which has a positive impact on people and planet.

The Garlic Farm's range has plenty to tempt customers looking for flavour boosts without compromise. "We grow and source delicious, healthy garlic varieties and garlic-infused products – from chutneys and sauces to beer and ice cream," begins Barnes Edwards, director at The Garlic Farm. "We're committed to bringing garlic flavour, inspiration and information to our customers, through our visitor farm and quality products."

Sustainability at its heart

A dedication to being responsible stewards of their land they farm is key to The Garlic Farm's mission. "Across all aspects of the business, we're guided by the principles of 'Efficiency' and 'Respect'," explains Barnes. "These values have become deeply embedded in our culture and are now formally recognised through B Corp Certification, Soil Association Organic Certification, and Pasture for Life Accreditation."

Working in harmony with nature is at the core of The Garlic Farm's ethos, says Barnes, and the business has invested in an eco-friendly approach – taking into account waste, ecosystems and soil structure – to make the production of their range as beneficial to the environment as possible. "We try to take measurable, tangible actions towards nature-friendly farming," he says. "We advocate for farm-to-fork, root-to-fruit dining, use our own pasture-raised cattle and goat, and compost our food waste, which we measure and continually aim to reduce."

Innovation is the name of the game. "We've also been experimenting with farming practices such as alley cropping, with the intention of sequestering carbon and providing wildlife corridors, as well as offering browse and shade for our livestock and (hopefully) improving soil structure," continues Barnes.

"Our WETland system is another interesting experiment; it's a series of shallow pools that treat our wastewater and it's also an ecosystem in its own right. Since being installed it has attracted rare birds, dragonflies and damselflies. We're tracking the wildlife populations in the hope that our small changes will help enhance biodiversity."

The journey towards organic

The path to organic status is long, but the people behind The Garlic Farm have powered through – with optimum results. "We've been very fortunate to learn from the organic and regenerative farming community throughout our organic journey," says Barnes. "The journey itself is lengthy and challenging but ultimately incredibly rewarding. It took three years to convert our farmland to organic and we are still learning new techniques to improve soil health and therefore crop health.

"Last year, we visited organic garlic farmers in the Drôme region of France, where we learned about controlling weeds without pesticides, which requires skill and timely mechanical intervention. We've also been fortunate to learn from our local community – Will from Living Larder (the island's only other organic farm), has been a great help."

Learning about soil structure has been a substantial part of The Garlic Farm's journey. "The creation of soil structure at microbial level is, among other things, nature's way of engineering water-holding capacity," explains Barnes. "We've been trying to encourage deep, strong roots by creating long rest periods for plants by altering our grazing system. The integration of pasture-fed, out-wintered, cattle into the rotation of our crop using a mob-grazing system seems to be helping to support soil health. We hope that converting to organic will help us deliver good outcomes for our team, customers, livestock, wildlife and the environment."

The future is looking bright for the organic mission at The Garlic Farm. "We have seen first-hand the positive effect organic farming practices have on the environment and on our crops," says Barnes. "Fewer pesticides and less intensive farming methods are good for soil health, biodiversity and for humans, too."





Trendy and planet-friendly

The Garlic Farm's newly extended Asian range is not only delicious, but its first entirely organic range – and more eco innovation is in the pipeline, says Barnes. "Our intention is to gradually convert all our products to organic. We've looked at the evidence of carbon emissions as well as biodiversity impact for organic farming and are committed making the change across our supply chain – no small challenge!"

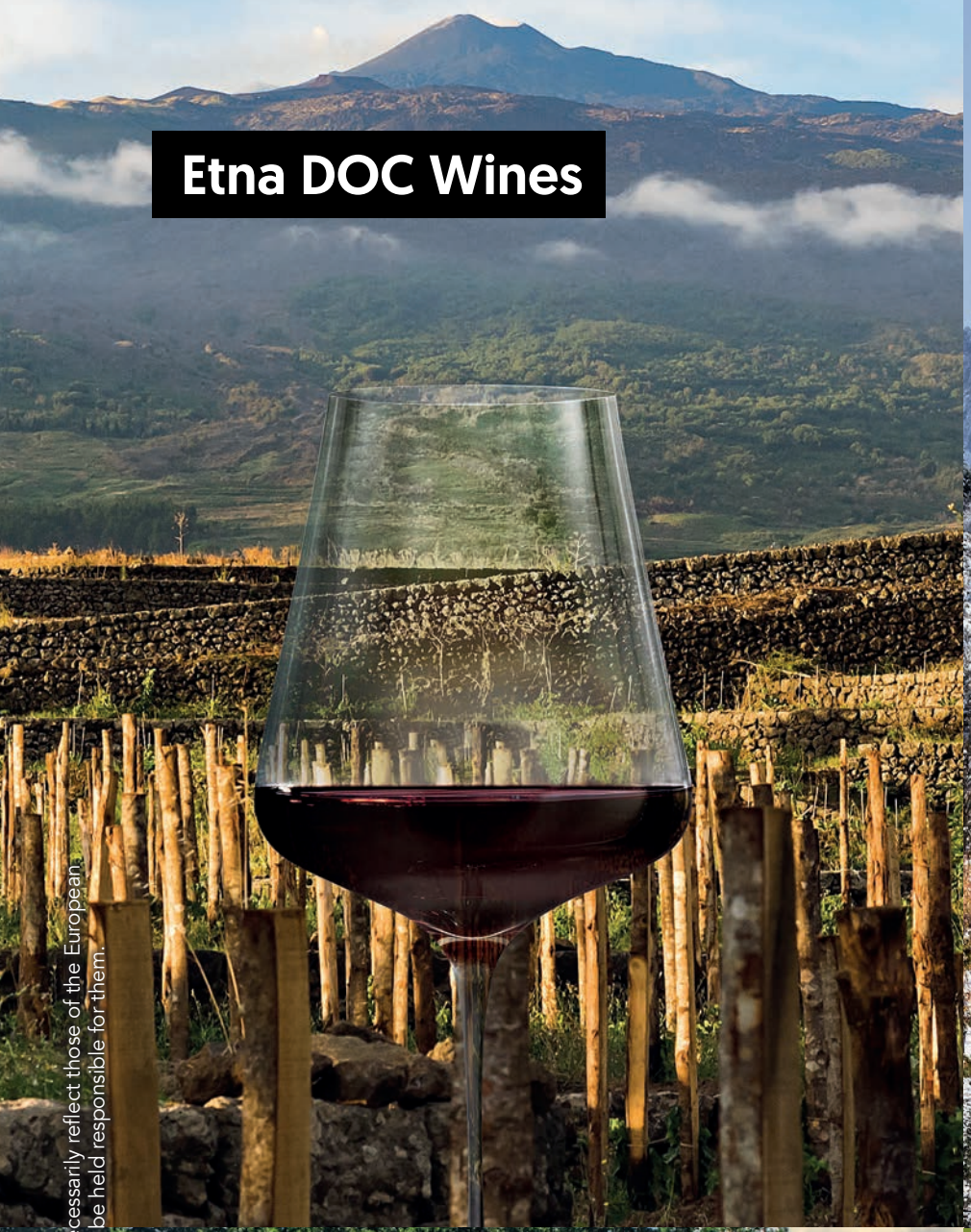
With Asian cuisine and ingredients "par for the course" in many British kitchens, creating this collection of store cupboard ingredients was, says Barnes, "a natural transition and one we were sure our customers would appreciate, with the recent rise of Pan-Asian and Asian-Fusion food in restaurants and markets."

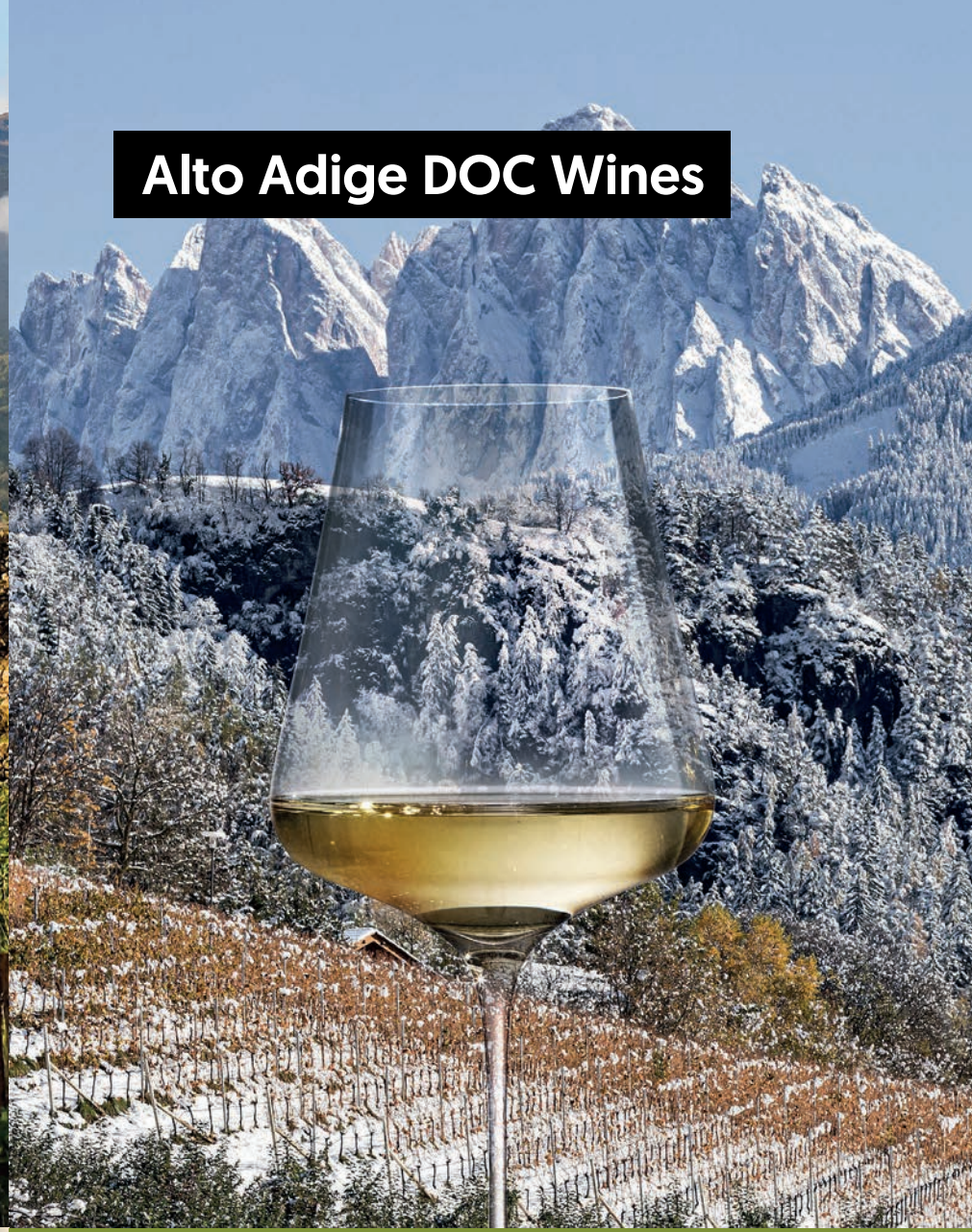
He is excited by the potential of The Garlic Farm's first full organic range of products – both for the business itself and its retail partners. "It's exciting for us as this is our first full organic range of products. We're helping our retailers expand their organic offerings and giving our customers more choice, as well as peace of mind that the products are made with consideration for environmental impact.

"We are working on transitioning all our products to organic, so expect to see some changes to the product range in the coming years. As always, quality is our priority – and plenty of garlic!"

With its sound sustainability credentials and flavour notes that are undoubtedly growing in popularity, The Garlic Farm's freshly extended Asian range is perfectly placed for independents wishing to not only excite the tastebuds of their most adventurous customers but step more lightly – and respectfully – on the natural world.

> "We're helping our retailers expand their organic offerings and giving our customers more choice, as well as peace of mind that the products are made with consideration for environmental impact"







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SEASONINGS

A kaleidoscope of flavour is at shoppers' fingertips... And there's plenty for retailers to explore, too

WHY ARE SEASONINGS TRENDING?

Offering instantaneous culinary travel from the comfort of shoppers' kitchens, it's no wonder that seasonings have taken off in a big way. While some foodies are resolute in their desire to only ever create their seasonings from scratch, there's a raft of consumers who are hungry for the fuss-free flavour seasonings can provide. From flavoured salts to taste-packed pre-mixes offering the aromas and tastes of everything from a Louisiana-inspired barbecue to a Moroccan souk, there's plenty for food lovers to get their teeth into.

WHY NOW?

Shoppers are busier than ever, and if a handy ambient pot is offering something humdrum into a taste sensation it's going to go down well. Speedy weekday meals can become an adventure, and – thanks to the likes of MSG – you don't need to spend hours reducing down sauces to ramp up flavour; you can just add a sprinkling of something from your cupboard instead.

"Today's home cooks want instant, effortless flavour – and they don't want to compromise on quality," says Anais Hancock, marketing manager at Cornish Sea Salt. "Our seasonings blend the finest ingredients with our signature sea salt, giving you a go-to product that can take a Tuesday-night dinner to the next level in seconds."

HOW HAVE SEASONINGS EVOLVED?

"Whereas a few years ago the trend was all about filling spice racks, now it's about a meeting point between authentic, time-honoured recipes and bold, experimental flavours, bringing something unique to the home kitchen with real simplicity," says Matt Hopkins, founder and CEO of IND!E!.

Seasonings brands are more visible than ever thanks to smart marketing – Lumberjaxe even appeared on the BBC's *Dragons' Den* – and they're giving people exactly what they want: travel without the time or price tag. The classics like salt and pepper will always be strong sellers for obvious reasons, but once shoppers discover that they can travel the world from their own dining table they'll be hooked.

WHAT'S ON THE MARKET?

"Seasonings is one of the most exciting and dynamic categories in UK food right now," says Matt. "We're seeing a wave of challenger brands reimagining the spice rack, from bright, adventurous flavour blends to beautifully packaged single-origin salts. For many, seasonings are a low-risk entry point for experimentation in the kitchen, which makes them a high-reward category for independent retailers."

WHY SHOULD INDIES GET IN ON THE ACTION?

"Independent retailers have the edge here," according to Matt. Seasonings are a low-cost, high-margin way to encourage discovery and repeat visits. Stocking an edit of artisan blends, single-origin spices, and contemporary seasoning formats can set a shop apart and build loyalty.

Brands like Honest Umami, Lumberjaxe and Field Blends are pushing the boat out when it comes to flavour options and formats, so go wild and see what your customers connect with.

WHAT ARE SHOPPERS LOOKING FOR?

Matt has his eye on functional blends – health-led seasonings with turmeric, adaptogens, or immunity-boosting ingredients; single-origin storytelling – provenance-forward spices with direct grower connections; creative flavour formats – from seasoning 'bombs' to innovative grind mixes; and premium salt experiences – salts as centrepiece ingredients rather than afterthoughts.

Ultimately, it comes down to a sense of adventure balanced with convenience, but Asian and swicy flavours are particularly popular right now.

WHAT'S THE HYPE AROUND MSG ALL ABOUT?

Rob Miller, co-founder of Honest Umami, says that the tide has – finally – turned on MSG (monosodium glutamate)'s negative reputation. After a lifetime of Asian cooks (both in restaurants and at home) using it in their kitchens, one fated letter spelled the beginning of the end for the pantry stalwart for decades in the Western world, but Rob and his team are passionate about the versatile seasoning's renaissance.

"Put simply, it dials up the flavour on everything," he says. Its name might sound like the kind of thing we all try to avoid on ingredients lists, but actually it's been around forever so isn't something to be frightened of, says Rob. "It's why sun dried tomatoes and Parmesan taste so good."

Thanks to Honest Umami, flavour-seeking shoppers don't need to buy kilo bags from their local Asian supermarket to get hold of MSG any more – the brand produces convenient small tubs in Pure MSG, Salt & Pepper, Chilli and 3-2-1 All Purpose varieties.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR SEASONINGS IN THE UK MARKET?

"We see a future bursting with variety, creativity, and flavour," concludes Anais. "People want seasoning blends that make their everyday meals exciting, and we're here for it – crafting, testing, and releasing new products that inspire kitchen adventures for years to come."





THE UK SEASONINGS MARKET IS EXPECTED TO GROW BY 5.8% BETWEEN 2025-2030

GRAND VIEW RESEARCH

> People want seasoning blends that make their everyday meals exciting

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Réalisation Audrey Paradisi

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20 OF THE BEST FOOD HALLS TO VISIT IN BRITAIN

Find some of the UK's (and world's) finest things to eat and drink in these foodie meccas

When it comes to artisanal food and drink, food halls are in a league of their own – alighting all the senses with a multitude of epicurean experiences. Here are just some of the best you can visit across Britain today.

SUFFOLK FOOD HALL

WHERSTEAD, IPSWICH, SUFFOLK

A fabulous family-owned foodie destination that's just grown and grown and grown since opening nearly 18 years ago.

Not only is it a hit with local food lovers, but Suffolk Food Hall has become a tourist attraction in its own right, creating a buzz amongst hungry travellers, who visit in droves to discover all the edible delights the county has to offer, under one roof.

And to enjoy everything the site has to offer – from a spacious play area overlooking the river Orwell, complete with a bouncy trampoline and ice cream shack, to a café, restaurant, beautifully curated home store and garden centre.

The food hall itself takes visitors on a meandering journey of all things good to eat and drink. In the fresh department, seasonal fruit and veg play a starring role, front and centre as customers enter – be that vivid spears of asparagus, earth-speckled new potatoes, or punnets of strawberries, their heady perfume of summer scenting the air.

This leads to aisles and shelves dazzling with local, regional and British ingredients and goodies, joined by buyers' picks from around the world – interspersed by a bakery (watch the team in action) delivering warm bread, pastries and cakes throughout the day, a butchery (famous for its sausages and steaks), a fish counter, and a deli laden with cheeses, house baked hams, pies and savouries.

Find everything you need and want, and more.

HARVEY BROWNS

ARRETON, ISLE OF WIGHT

A sight to behold. Harvey Browns' striking modern building is positioned on a fourth-generation family farm, known for cropping asparagus, strawberries, sweetcorn and more.

All feature within the enormous, capacious food hall, where there's oodles of space to wheel around your trolley and get your fill of the Island's feast of treasures.



As growers, the team give fresh produce lots of attention in the hall – the farm's own fare positioned alongside fruit and vegetables from neighbouring farms.

Then there are aisles and fridges and freezers of everything else you could possibly need.

Plus, a massive deli counter brimming with charcuterie, cheeses, salads, quiches, Scotch eggs and their own fabulous pies (a favourite is the Picnic Pie with local sausagemeat, chorizo, roasted peppers and sundried tomatoes), bread from Lostmill Bakery, and a butchery, led by master butchers who carefully prepare locally-reared meat, with some cuts aged in the Himalayan salt cabinet.

Enjoy gazing over the Arreton Valley by stopping awhile for breakfast, lunch or cakes in the lakeside kitchen. Their signature dish is homegrown grilled asparagus with crispy egg, Hollandaise sauce, confit tomatoes and pesto.

POPLAR FOOD HALL, POPLAR NURSERIES, MARKS TEY, ESSEX

There was dismay in North Essex in 2017 when popular food hall, The Food Company, closed its doors. However, that dismay has been short-lived, with a nearby garden centre picking up the mantel for find food in the area.

Poplar Nurseries is so much more than a garden centre – it's a local institution, with a restaurant (selling one of the biggest ranges of cakes anywhere in the county), indoor and outdoor plant areas, gift and homeware, barbecues, furniture ... there's even a miniature railway!

A farm shop/food shop has long been part of the offering, but the business ramped up its offering in 2021, moving its food department out of the main store and into its own building.

A shrewd decision, and one that's given foodies even more licence to make the trip to this corner of Essex near Colchester.

Well curated and laid out, every little nook and cranny of the food hall is filled with deliciousness. Chillers of smoked meat and fish. Local seasonal produce. Breads. Oils. Chutneys. Weird and wonderful snacks. A superb array of quirky spirits you really won't find easily elsewhere. An excellent deli counter of cheeses, ready meals, side dishes to heat at home and charcuterie. A freezer of their own prepared meals.

Standing head and shoulders above all of that, though, is the cake counter, which is truly something to behold, and has always been a crowd drawer for the food hall in all its guises. Along the length of the counter is a collection of drool-worthy bakes - the stuff dreams are made of. We're talking blousy meringues, cheesecakes crowned with whirls of cream, towering layered cakes, big hunky chunks of brownie and rocky road ...and savouries such as sausage rolls, quiches and samosas.

Resistance is futile.

HARRODS FOOD HALLS

LONDON

Get your glam on in what's been a source of fine food inspiration for generations. It just feels special shopping here, in a setting where chandeliers marry with touches of marble, gorgeous tiling, ornate ceilings and bespoke display cabinets.

Harrods is relied upon by gourmands for delivering the perfect balance of tradition and modernity. Customers want to experience the latest trends, but also to relish in heritage, classic, nostalgic foods, made with the finest ingredients.

At the beating heart of the food halls is the Fresh Market Hall, where shoppers can stock up on pies, fish cakes, salmon en croute, salads, rare, exotic and heritage fruit and vegetables, live shellfish, colourful eggs, cheeses and, of course, caviar.

That's not to mention Harrods' famous rotisserie, where slow-grown, 24-hour marinated chickens are cooked to perfection. Or the fact the deli area has its own 'master carver' to slice slivers of Iberico ham to your liking.

The Chocolate Hall features some of the best confectionery money can buy – be that Turkish delight, fudge churned in copper pans, covered fruit and nuts, more than two dozen varieties of filled chocolate bars, or the chefs' own bon bons and chocolate slabs.

Move on next to the Roastery and Bake Hall, sampling the house coffee blend at the coffee bar, picking up some outstanding patisserie for pudding, and listening out for the bell, which rings on the half hour to announce that the latest batch of pastries and breads have just been pulled from the oven.

Finish your trip here in the Art Deco Wines and Spirits Hall. Did you



know Harrods has its own label wines and unique blends of whisky?

FODDER, GREAT YORKSHIRE FOOD HALL, HARROGATE, YORKSHIRE

Found at the home of the Great Yorkshire Show, this food hall (renamed recently) is unique, as it's run by Yorkshire Agricultural Society, with all profits going to charity, supporting the local farming and countryside communities.

If you want to get a real sense of what Yorkshire's broad food and drink scene has to offer (and it is broad, this is one of the biggest counties in Britain), then this is the place to go. Every fridge, shelf, freezer and counter is a celebration of this corner of the UK, and there's a tangible sense of pride in this you can almost feel as you walk around. Even the walls are dedicated to Yorkshire makers, boasting artwork of suppliers Fodder has worked with for years.

What will you find here? The answer is everything. Brilliant Yorkshire charcuterie. Meat sourced 100% from Yorkshire on the butchery counter. Local cheeses. Homemade pies, salads, soups and sausage rolls. Yorkshire made biscuits, chocolates, honey, beers and spirits. A display of cinnamon whirls and croissants made nearby by Underground Bakery. Yorvale ice cream, made using the farm's own milk from their small herd of Friesian cows.

And you can really hammer the Yorkshire food message home by staying for a bite and a cuppa in the cafe.

JARROLDS FOOD HALL

NORWICH, NORFOLK

Outside of London, this could win the award for most beautiful food hall in Britain. There's not one part of the space (in the basement of the city's coveted independent department store) that hasn't been carefully considered.

It's a place for foodies to utterly lose themselves. In the wine bar, book shop, or the sea of kitchenalia and cooking gadgets.

Central to the stylish food hall is its deli counter, where the county's cheeses (Norfolk Dapple, Binham Blue) are given a good showing alongside cured meats, salads, olives, picky bits, and ideal picnic fodder from star chef Richard Bainbridge.

The deli even has its own dedicated cheese room!

Get lost amongst the displays of ambient products, combining the best of Norfolk, Britain and Europe. Colourful pastas. Snacks, crisps and nuts worthy of being decanted into your prettiest bowls. A plethora of chutneys, jams and pickles. A huge array of confectionery and chocoalte for on-the-go nibbling and gifting. Loads of local beers, wines and spirits (including Bullards Gin on refill). And lots of Jarrolds' own-branded goods, made in partnership with some of the buying team's favourite producers.

MACKNADE

FAVERSHAM, KENT

Community is everything to the owners of this food hall, whose roots in growing and markets mean they truly understand what it is to be a producer, and what really great food looks like. The team go above and beyond to source ingredients and products from sustainable, ethical suppliers who care about what they've grown or made – bringing the very best to the plate for their customers.

Fresh vegetables and fruit are given the love and attention they deserve.

The deli offers a collection of exceptionally well looked after cured meats, salamis, pates and cheeses.

There's a bakery, a fishmonger on Saturdays, and a certified Pasture For Life butchery, championing grassfed, grazed animals.

And the newest addition is the wines and spirits store, where the team love showcasing the wide range of Kentish producers, alongside bottles from New and Old World makers.

If you're peckish, you simply have to try the a signature Macknade Rarebit in the cafe – layering chunky bread with Wookey Hole Cheddar, Smoked Northumberland cheese, cream cheese, leeks and wholegrain mustard, and served with burnt tomato chutney and green salad.

In the warmer months from Thursday to Sunday, Macknade's Food Village opens too, with a plethora of street food vendors offering everything from katsu curry to tacos and crepes.

DARTS FARM

TOPSHAM, EXETER, DEVON

An award-winning business – and rightly so. You can easily lose a whole day at Darts Farm – where there's so much more than a food hall to explore. An artisan school, wellness spa, fishing ponds, play area, nature walks ... and numerous eateries, offering everything from breakfasts and Devon scones, through to









sourdough pizzas, and steaks.

Cow & Cacao is a particularly exciting part of the package. The cafe makes its own gelato, and has its own chocolatier, crafting bean-to-bar decadences.

As farmers, provenance, sustainability and quality feed into every part of the food hall, stocking their own grown and homemade products, then reaching into Devon and the South-West's larder before heading further afield.

The offering includes their honey chocolate, honey from their own hives, homegrown and locally grown fruit and vegetables, and their own slowly reared Ruby Red cattle, grazed on nearby wetlands – an ingredient the butchers treat with the upmost care and pride.

In the deli counter, find cheeses from artisan who share Darts Farm's slow food ethos. Makers who use value terroir and traditional practices. These sit with real charcuterie (some made locally using the farm's beef), salads, pastries and pies – the wherewithal for a fabulous picnic.

If that wasn't enough to have you sprinting to the car for a road trip, Darts Farm has its own single-estate vineyard, producing award-winning sparkling wines, made using the Champagne method, and has partnered with the founder of Sandford Orchards to form a cidery. The first collaboration – Katja Rose – is a sparkler, made by crushing Katy dessert apples with hand-picked Rondo grapes from the farm's vineyard.

EATALY, LONDON

If you love Italian food you simply HAVE to go here. There's a restaurant for every occasion (date nights to casual lunches), and a cafe with lots of grab and go options at the ground floor entrance – perfect if you're looking for something quick to eat on the fly travelling in or out of Liverpool Street Station (just next door).

Or linger a bit longer. The cafe will lead you through a confectionery tunnel (yes, you read that right) lined from end to end with shiny wrapped Italian candies, gianduja and bon bons to pick and mix, as well as chocolate spreads, chocolate bars and more.

At the other side is the bakery, where olive oil-slathered focaccia nestle next to country style loaves, and where you can pick up pizza by the slice, fresh pasta, salads and savouries to-go, or to enjoy in the casual eatery over a glass of wine or spritz.

Upstairs, the experience continues. With fresh produce (think super ripe tomatoes perfect for saucing and mozzarella made before your very eyes), a deli counter exploding with speciality Italian cheeses and meats, a butchery stocking ethically and sustainably sourced meat, fish, wines and spirits, and an incredible range of sauces, stocks, pasta, risotto rice, risotto mixes, biscuits, grissini, balsamic vinegar and oils.

The food hall stocks an enormous range of panettone at Christmas too.

SELFRIDGES FOOD HALL
LONDON

A go-to for foodies in the capital, who visit for the restaurants and cafes (whatever your heart desires, from Champagne and oysters or bubble tea and cereal flavoured soft serve ice cream), to build hampers of distinction with the food concierge team, or, of course, to browse the food hall's offering – which is vast.

The team go far and wide to ensure every visit brings something new and exciting, with innovative products jostling position amongst long-held customer favourites.

This is the place to head if you want to fill your basket with the latest gut-friendly sodas and protein waters, finest Pierre Marcolini chocolates, tins of Borilla olive oil crisps ... even personalised cakes, cookies, Champagne and spirits!

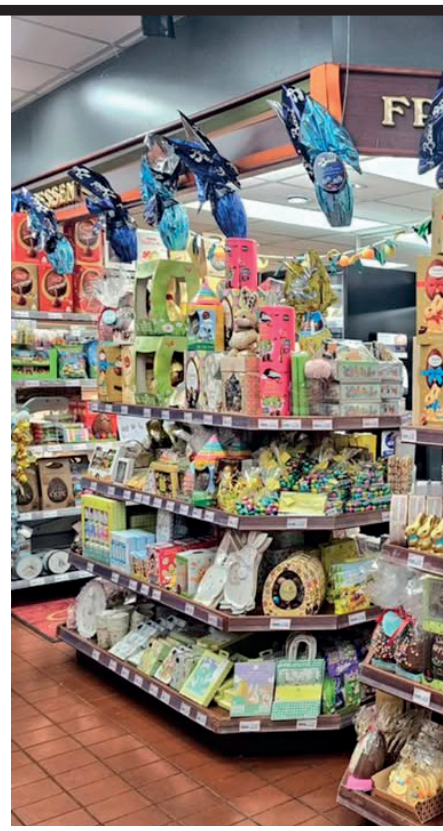
A walk of the floor will inspire at every turn. There's bread and pastries. Fresh herbs to pot up at home. A meat counter stocking fabulous grass-fed beef. Fresh fish. Counters of prepared meals, cured meats, olives and the very best British and European cheeses.

Gifts are a speciality.

FLOURISH FOODHALL
GLENARVON FARM (ALSO FARLEIGH ROAD)

One of the UK's only B Corp retailers, heavily invested in doing good – by its staff (who love working there), customers and nature.

At every stage of the buying process, the team look for products that have people and the environment at heart. Both food halls are expansive in their offering, ensuring they meet customers' day-to-day needs (milk, fresh local bread, fruit and vegetables, cheeses (curated by Neal's Yard Dairy), eggs) while introducing them to excellent local producers.



Don't leave without grass-fed beef from the butchery, a huge Scotch egg from the deli counter (renowned for its savouries), one of the various cakes and bakes from the patisserie (Pipp & Co supply doughnuts on Fridays), a bite from the bagel bar, or without sampling something from the restaurant.

It's open for breakfast, lunch and brunch, and the offering is far beyond what you might find in the average cafe – spanning everything from shakshuka, to Flourish's own burger and homemade flatbreads with myriad toppings.

BOWLAND FOOD HALL
CLITHEROE, LANCASHIRE

This food hall is Lancashire through







and through. And we mean that. The impressive 'wavy fronted' building houses probably every product made in the county. Beer and spirits from the area (including Bowland Brewery and Bowland Distillery), Lancashire Tea, Lancashire Crisps, Lancashire Parkin.

That thread of 'local' weaves its way through every part of the business, though other speciality foods from around get their own area too.

And there's a butchery, and deli counter absolutely packed with cheeses (some local ones of course), cured meats, sausages rolls, pies and more.

Homemade fare is par for the course in the onsite cafe, where you can dive into homemade soups, salads, buddha bowls, sandwiches and hot main dishes, with a Lancashire steer wherever they can squeeze it in.

VALVONA & CROLLA
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

The oldest deli/food hall in Scotland, and certainly one of the oldest in Britain. There's 90 years of heritage here, and the Italian family behind the business are thrilled it holds a Royal Warrant as a cheese supplier to King Charles III.

So much effort goes into making the shelves sing at Valvona & Crolla, working with Italian artisans and small producers to bring an authentic taste of the country to Scotland's capital.

It's unlikely you'll see much of what they have anywhere else – certainly not in your local supermarket!

A star turn is the deli counter. An absolute celebration of Italian cheeses (look out for the stunning goats' cheese rolled in flowers) and charcuterie.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are sourced from markets in Milan every week. The onsite bakery crafts all the food hall's bread and pastries. And stock up on fresh and dried pasta, antipasti (artichoke cream, pesto, olives and more), wines and sprits, coffee, chocolates, sweets and kitchenalia.

There's a nod to Scotland too, with several local products to choose from.

Regular visitors will know Valvona & Crolla's cafe and restaurant is considered one of the best places to eat in Edinburgh – winning Italian



Restaurant of the Year in the 2024 Scottish Restaurant Awards.

The casual (but chic) eatery caters to all appetites, whether you're after a few nibbles (arancini, Parmesan with poppy seed crisps), or something heartier like cotechino with olive oil mash, lentils and mustard fruits, or pizza.

FORTNUM & MASON, LONDON

Trundling home with an eggshell blue parcel tucked under your arm is considered the last word in luxury.

The food hall – colloquially simply known as 'Fortnums' - is somewhere foodies like to be seen. But it's not all smoke and mirrors. There's a reason this institution has endured since the early 1700s – it's really rather good.

When you shop here, you can be assured you're buying the creme de la creme. What sets Fortnums apart is its entwining of tradition and playfuless. Everything looks effortlessly artful, and the designers, buyers and merchandisers ensure they create buying experiences and displays that spark conversations and strike curiosity – they aren't afraid to be playful and have fun! Case in point is last year's collaboration with tongue-in-cheek American-style Leeds-based bakery, Get Baked, or the brand's own quirky products such as its wonderful Toffolossus biscuits.

Where do we start otherwise? There's oodles to explore. Beef Wellingtons and salt-aged beef joints for the ultimate Sunday roast. Amazing cheeses, including Fortnums' own showstopping jars of potted varieties such as Truffle & Honey, or Rarebit (Yorkshire bacon, West Country Cheddar, ale and mustard). The finest tea cakes you've ever seen in your life. Cutesy chocolate animals in tiny boxes.

Fortnum's strength is in the values behind its own-label products. No stone is left unturned in seeking out the very very finest makers.

Oh – and while you're there, buy a Scotch egg (they claim to be the inventor of the snakc in the mid-1700s). And head to The Parlour – home of the original knickerbocker glory – to sample the OG version, to construct your own sundae from a flurry of ice cream flavours, sauces and toppings, or to try a Champagne float or red velvet soft serve.

PARTRIDGES, LONDON

The Shepherd family have been purveying great food for 50 years, holding a Royal Warrant as a grocer for 31 of them.

The food hall has many feathers to its cap. It leans into the tradition and creature comforts we all crave right now, places value on outstanding customer service, is recognised for its sustainability, and champions the next generation of producers which it names its 'Startisans'.

It's the kind of place that draws you in closer once you've picked up the item you actually went in for. You might be distracted by a wall of preserved fish in their striking tins, by some of the weird and wonderful creations from America, by newcomers (such as Diana's Chocolate made in London) and by unusual things you've never seen before – Hasting's Lemon Ketchup, maybe, or jars of sundried white figs.

Partridges offers its own lines as well – from Pear & Elderflowe Jam, to Honey & Lavendar Butter Biscuits, Green Pepper Mustard, and Chelsea Flower Gin. This homage to the borough was designed with acclaimed distiller Martin Murray, expressing the essence of Chelsea in bloom using 19 botanicals, with a subtle hint of rose.

SNAPE MALTINGS FOOD HALL
SNAPE, SUFFOLK

A skip and a hop from the chic seaside resort of Aldeburgh (renowned for its restaurants, cafes and famous fish and chips) Snape Maltings is a daytrippers dream. Not only does it house the world-famous concert hall, but on the site are antiques, gift and art shops, a huge home and lifestyle hall, a cafe, restaurant and deli.

Sculptures by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth accent the grounds, from where you can take a boat trip upriver, or head out on a walk across the marshlands.

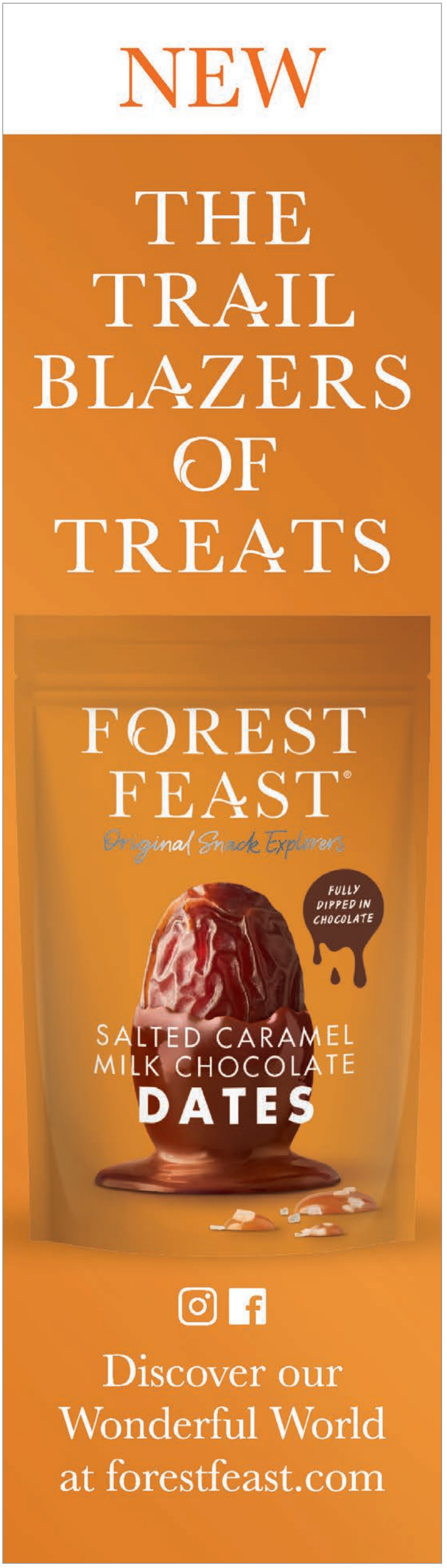
It's also home to the annual Aldeburgh Food & Drink Festival.

The Food Hall is cleverly laid out with floor-to-ceiling shelving and almost eye-level displays, so your gaze is always captured by something tantalising (no matter how tall you are).

There's an extensive range of spirits, beers, wines and ciders. Row upon row of pasta, rice and risotto. Cooking sauces, marinades and dips from across the world. Confectionery. And snacks of distinction.

Look out for local brands including Edwards Cocktails and Pump Street chocolate.

Being ambient only, it perfectly complements the deli next door, where there's an even more prevalent array of Suffolk and British ingredients and products.



COMMENTATORS



NATALIE DOUGLAS
SPONGE CAKES



CHARLOTTE O'NEILL
CARTRIGHT & BUTLER



JO EVANS
FIGGY'S



MATT WHELAN
FIELDFARE



ANNABEL DE CAPELL BROOKE
ALGY'S FARM SHOP

COMFORT BAKED IN

Festive-flavoured cakes and puddings are must-stocks at this time of year – we ask the experts what's worth stocking and why



Passing around a slice of something sweet, fruity and gently spiced is one of the most traditional aspects of Christmas – almost nothing brings loved ones together like a sweet treat, after all – but many experts say that the tide is turning on classic formats and flavours, and we've all been at a table come Christmas Day where more people are turning away from the traditional pud in favour of more modern (and often lighter) indulgences to end their meal.

That's not to say that consumers are rejecting familiar festive fare altogether – in fact, they're looking for exciting new ways to enjoy them, says Natalie Douglas, director at Sponge Cakes. "Nostalgia and tradition remain at the heart of Christmas 2025, but they're being reimagined with a modern flair," she begins. "People are gravitating towards desserts that spark childhood memories, from chocolate mint flavours reminiscent of the after-dinner chocolates to spiced fruit cakes evoking the cosy glow of family gatherings. But these classics are appearing in fresher forms: lighter textures and refined presentations. It's all about recapturing the joy of Christmas past, while giving it an exciting update for today's festive tables."

Festive flavours in 2025

Crowd pleasing flavours are back in the spotlight, but with inventive twists to keep things fresh, suggests Natalie. "Mint, orange, spiced gingerbread, and rich chocolate remain staples but 2025 sees them paired with modern accents such as coffee. People want the comfort of familiarity, but with a little added surprise."

Charlotte O'Neill, commercial director at Cartright & Butler, agrees. "In 2025, customers are seeking the comforting flavours they grew up with – rich spices, sweet fruits, and buttery notes – yet with a modern flourish that sparks curiosity. Nostalgic festive tastes remain at the heart of their choices, but subtle twists and fresh interpretations are what make these seasonal bakes feel exciting and new," she says.

"This year's festive flavour trends strike a perfect balance between comforting tradition and modern indulgence. Think the warming spice of gingerbread, the nostalgic notes of festive spice blends, and the bright zest of orange lifted by tart cranberries – all anchored by the buttery richness of classic Christmas bakes."

Evolving formats

With a choice of desserts being preferable at many festive tables, the time has come to rethink the traditional family-sized Christmas pudding and cake, suggests Natalie. "The era of a single Christmas cake or pudding is fading, giving way to variety and sharing. Smaller formats; think bite-sized puddings, and dessert platters, are trending

WHY **FROZEN FOOD** IS THE MODERN GO-TO AT **CHRISTMAS**



Matt Whelan, managing director at Fieldfare, explains why it's worth stocking up on frozen indulgences for the festive season

Frozen desserts are a smart, low-risk addition to any retailer's festive range, but they can be particularly beneficial for farm shops or speciality stores where desserts might not be their core offering. With extended shelf lives and no pressure to shift stock quickly, frozen allows retailers to offer shoppers a premium dessert fixture without the worry of waste or short dated stock.

For shoppers, dessert is often the one part of the festive menu they're most likely to outsource, and frozen makes this effortless. Stocking the freezer with a few trusted options means they are ready for whatever the festive season brings, from planned dinner parties to unexpected guests.

While Christmas is rooted in tradition, dessert is often where households like to break the mould. Fieldfare's range caters to a range of tastes; from lighter options such as our Lovely Lemon Cheesecake, to more indulgent options such as our melt in the middle Salted Caramel Fondant or our new (vegan-friendly) Belgian Chocolate Tartlet, we offer something for everyone at the table.

Our pick your own format offers households the freedom and flexibility to buy exactly what, and how much they need to suit whatever they may have planned to celebrate the occasion. So, whether shoppers are buying for one, or need to mix and match desserts to please the whole table, Fieldfare's offering helps households celebrate on their own terms without waste or compromising on quality desserts.

> "Fieldfare's offering helps households celebrate on their own terms without waste or compromising on quality desserts"





as families and friends want choice at the table," she says. "This "pick-and-mix" approach reflects how we celebrate now: more informally, more inclusively, and more flexibly. Importantly, dietary inclusivity is at the centre of this trend. Gluten-free, vegan, and dairy-free bakes in classic flavours mean everyone can join in, it's no longer about compromising taste for dietary needs."

Indeed, many festive gatherings these days involve hosting someone following a vegan diet, which means stocking plant-based alternatives to classic Christmas cakes is a good move. "There's also a growing appetite for plant-based versions of these classics, ensuring no-one misses out on the taste of Christmas," says Natalie.

Tradition versus innovation

Tradition will always form a vital part of festive celebrations, says Jo Evans, owner of Figgy's Puddings, which has been making traditional, Great Taste Award-winning puddings for almost 20 years using a family recipe. "Our Christmas puddings are about as traditional as you can get (apart from using vegetarian suet instead of beef). Fortunately, a traditional Christmas still seems to be very important to consumers."

While less classic options are making headway, there will always be an appetite for classic festive puddings – and Jo has some top advice for retailers looking to sell the very best to their customers. "As with so many traditional dishes, Christmas pudding really can't be rushed or the result can be stodgy, dry and disappointing," she says. "Therefore, always go for those that have been handmade and come from an artisan kitchen. That way you'll be sure to have a Christmas pudding that reminds your customers of those their grandmother would have made, rather than disappointing supermarket stodge!"

When it comes to how to sell great Christmas pud, samples are a winning technique, says Jo. "A good Christmas pudding sells itself when offered as a hot taster with clotted cream. It's also a great winter warmer for your customers as they come in from the cold. Of course, a hot taster of quality Christmas pudding won't just sell itself, it will also instil some extra Christmas cheer in your customers as they browse your Christmas offerings!"

"For us, innovation rooted in tradition is winning," says Natalie. "The magic of Christmas lies in familiar flavours and rituals, but people also want to feel surprised and delighted. That's why we take timeless flavours; rich fruit, warming spices, chocolate-orange, and reinterpret them in ways that feel exciting for today's celebrations. At the same time, we ensure that our specialist dietary bakes meet the same high standards as our traditional cakes, so no one feels left out of that shared festive experience.

RETAILER INSIGHT



Annabel de Capell Brooke, general manager at Algy's Farm Shop, says that shoppers are willing to spend more on quality

I think that people are valuing traditional more than ever, possibly because their money is tighter and they're really having to think about their spend and avoid wastage. Our customers are still willing to spend more for quality, locally-made produce though. The Christmas puddings that we source are all locally made and have always flown off the shelf and received really, really good feedback.

> "Customers are seeking the comforting flavours they grew up with – spices, fruit and buttery notes – with a modern flourish that sparks curiosity"

STOCK CHECK



MARABISSI CHOCOLATE PANFORTE CAKE

A dense, generously fruited traditional Italian cake, packed with almonds, spices, fruit and cacao. Just wonderful with a coffee or dessert wine.

justgourmetfoods.co.uk



THE ORIGINAL CAKE CO DELUXE FESTIVE CHOCOLATE TRUFFLE CAKES

Nine individually wrapped squares of indulgent chocolate truffle cake hand decorated with an assortment of festive decorations.

originalcake.co.uk



COLE'S PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE CHRISTMAS PUDDING

A rich pudding made with pear cider and candied pear.

colespuddings.com



FIGGY'S LUXURY HANDMADE CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Light, moist and fruity, and infused with a generous serving of rich cask-aged Somerset Cider Brandy and Hanlons champion Port Stout.

figgys.co.uk



SEGGIANO CLASSIC VIN SANTO PANETTONE

Handmade by a family-run bakery in Tuscany and enriched with 12% DOC Vin Santo del Chianti.

seggiano.com



GRANDMA WILD'S STEM GINGER CAKE

A deliciously rich, warm ginger sponge containing stem ginger pieces, which add to the depth of the spicy flavour.

grandmawilds.co.uk



CENTRE SPRE

By drawing on centuries of experience in producing, ripening, and handling Europe's finest speciality cheeses, Emmi has developed a range that always offers an opportunity to discover a new favourite.
emmi.com

Boost your counter with this selection of Emmi's finest cheeses

1 BETTINE PEARLS



Made from 100% natural, pasteurised goat's milk, these creamy pearls bring a fresh, mild flavour to every bite. Bettine Pearls are perfect for topping salads, pizza, pasta or soup – little bursts of flavour that elevate any dish. Resealable and fridge-friendly for everyday ease.

2 BETTINE SLICES



Mild, pure, and naturally rich in protein and vitamins, this award-winning goat's cheese melts gently on the tongue with a fresh, creamy finish. Bettine Natural is delicious on its own or as a smooth, flavourful addition to your favourite dishes – simple, honest, and full of character.

3 BETTINE N°3



Delicately ripened from the outside in, this award-winning goat's cheese is fresh, creamy, and buttery soft, with a fine edible rind and a gently intensifying flavour. Bettine No3 is perfect in thin slices on charcoal crackers, topped with ripe fig or a touch of sweet and spicy chilli jam.

4 KALTBACH TRUFFLE



Fresh truffles are blended into the milk before this firm, delicate cheese is aged in the legendary Kaltbach cave, where it develops its signature nutty depth and earthy aroma. The Truffle pairs effortlessly with Chenin Blanc and melts beautifully into gourmet grilled cheese – indulgent, elegant, and irresistibly easy to enjoy.



5 KALTBACH GRUYÈRE AOP



Crafted using time-honoured methods and aged in our sandstone cave for up to 12 months, this cheese develops a fruity tang and delicate salt crystals under the care of our Cavemasters. Its rustic rind and tender texture pair beautifully with honey, almonds or white chocolate. Melt into a ham sandwich or enjoy with Burgundy or single-malt Scotch.

6 KALTBACH CREAMY



Enhanced with extra cream, this award-winning cheese melts delicately on the tongue, its silky texture and rich flavour making it a favourite among connoisseurs. Pairs with honey, blackberries or pineapple and shines in a salad with lemon vinaigrette and pomegranate. A crisp Gose or bright Chardonnay completes the indulgence.

7 KALTBACH FONDUE



Crafted from our finest Kaltbach Le Gruyère AOP and Emmentaler AOP, this fondue blend is aged in the sandstone cave for exceptional depth and creaminess. Intensely aromatic and beautifully smooth, it transforms any fondue evening into a flavourful celebration. Pair with crusty bread, pickles – and good company.

8 EMMI RACLETTE



Made from the finest Swiss milk and naturally lactose-free, this Raclette melts to perfection – rich, smooth, and full of flavour. Traditionally served with small potatoes, pickles and pepper, it's also ideal for gratins, jacket potatoes or grilled toasties with ham, tomatoes and onions.

COMMENTATORS



CHRIS POLLARD
MANGROVE



LAUREN DENYER
WSET SCHOOL LONDON



MARIAM MAHMUD
KAHOL



RICHARD TRING
THE APERITIVO! CO



MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI

RAISE A GLASS

The season of celebration is nearly upon us, so now's the perfect time to refresh your drinks offering... These are the products worth stocking now

While the cost-of-living crisis is undoubtedly a consideration for shoppers and retailers alike, Christmas is a time where consumers feel able to widen their budgets a little in celebration of the season – for the right product, of course. "The cost-of-living crisis has an impact on everything spirits related. But, the festive period is the one time we see people extend those budgets and reach for higher price points. That trend isn't expected to change for Christmas 2025," says Chris Pollard, global sales director at Mangrove. "People will still go out to celebrate, indulge at their Christmas parties, and shop nice gifts for their loved ones. It's all about winning that custom by delivering the right range and service – and data shows that premiumisation still has a hold when it comes to spirits. So don't be afraid to opt-up when selecting your range!"

Of course, a festive party wouldn't be the same without a glass (or more) of fizz, says Lauren Denyer, educator at WSET School London. "Champagne will never go out of fashion and the more patriotic premium fizz lovers may well be reaching for English Sparkling Wine as it is appearing more frequently on supermarket shelves. However for a more wallet friendly alternative, Crémants from the French regions of Alsace, the Loire, Burgundy and Limoux provide great fizz and are delicious and made in the same way as Champagne."

Warm customers' cockles

When it comes to trending tastes, most can predict what will sell well – flavours that bring warmth, comfort and joy are expected to outsell more refreshing options – but it pays to keep a keen focus on quality and story, says Chris. "We're expecting spice to be a fan favourite this Christmas, but in the depths of winter we'll be embracing those deeper, nuttier varieties – like cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg. We all still seek indulgence in the cooler months, so sweet drinks with dessert type flavours will also likely be prominent.

"In terms of wider trends, we're expecting to see a focus on quality of ingredients and provenance of origin continue; people are more mindful with their drinking nowadays and want to know they're drinking something high-quality."

Some drinks are seeing their star rising as we enter the festive season. "Rum is set to be the spirit of choice, with all its varieties – but especially its darker variants – taking centre stage," says Chris. "Nostalgia's the theme of 2025, so this Christmas expect to see switch-ups of classic cocktails. Martinis, Negronis, Old-Fashioneds, all with twists to those usual flavours that satisfy modern drinkers."

When it comes to making your drinks selection stand out during party season, supplying shoppers with the classics they turn every winter – while helping them create an occasion – will reap rewards. "Christmas is an excuse to glitz things up a bit, chuck a sparkler in a cocktail, down the obligatory yearly eggnog, crack open more bubbles than usual. We like to mark an occasion," says Lauren. "Christmas is a great time for fortified wine, such as Port, Madeira and Sherry. Not only do they provide a lovely warmth at a notably cold time of year they are excellent as a digestif (and lower alcohol than spirits), or with a cheese plate. Christmas is a rare period where we have time to indulge and linger after a meal. Snacking on cheese while sipping a Tawny Port or a slightly sweet Madeira is hard to beat! So while these wines are classics, they also tend to be pretty seasonal."

Don't forget low/no

Every party will have a handful of guests who don't drink alcohol, so it pays to stock a few products that will make them feel just as looked after as the conventional drinkers at the do. "The no and low alcohol movement is still strong and growing, no alcohol wine has grown by 8% in 2024 so look out for some 0% alcohol bubbles, there are great ones on the market now," advises Lauren.

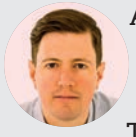
"Low and no options are increasingly an important aspect of ensuring all family and friends can feel included in the ritual of celebration, whether it's through gifting the perfect spirit alternative or having 0% fizz on hand for a toast," begins Mariam Mahmud, co-founder of Kahol. "On an individual level, what often gets overlooked is the almost magical role spirit replicas play in allowing those who have given up drinking, particularly for health reasons, the chance to recreate their favourite festive traditions."

Still unsure how to present low/no options? The answer is in offering them as clear-cut alternatives to conventional options, and making the customer journey as smooth as possible. "Generally across drinks retailing I think there is an opportunity to move towards presenting non alcoholic drinks shoulder to shoulder with alcohol to optimise both the browsing experience for the customer and also the purchasing opportunity for the retailer," she advises. "In the same way we see dairy alternatives sitting alongside cow's milk and vegan sausages alongside the traditional kind, customers should be presented with both options at point of purchase. The Christmas period is a particularly hectic time and I think the more that can be done to make purchasing decisions seamless the better."

Many shoppers have traditionally felt uncomfortable paying seemingly high prices for non-alcoholic drinks, but with smart promotion and education – making sure that the full retail team is genned up – it doesn't need to be a sticking point. "Pricing has always been sensitive thing in the category – historically prices have been driven, and justified, by the cost of innovation and small batch size – but increasingly we



STOCKING **APERITIFS**



A solid aperitif range has three pillars, says Richard Tring of The Aperitivo! Co

- **VERMOUTHS**
  Dry and sweet vermouths are the backbone of classic aperitif cocktails though rose vermouths are growing in popularity
- **BITTERS**
  Our Red Bitter is essential for Negronis and Americanos
- **APERITIVO STYLE LIQUEURS**
  Products like our Venice Aperitivo which open up spritz and sour style drinks

Rosso Vermouth and Red Bitter work brilliantly in warming spiced cocktails like Negronis or Boulevardiers. They go well with garnishes like orange peel, star anise or cinnamon to give a festive vibe.

Orange Triple Sec is a Christmas favourite too, it's great in mulled wine, and pairs well with fresh oranges, cranberries and festive glassware.



RETAILER **INSIGHT**



We catch up with Mark Kacary, owner of The Norfolk Deli, to find out how his drinks range evolves over the festive period

Consumers at Christmas tend to be prepare to spend a little more than they usually would. They are looking for something different, something indulgent. It's that one time of year when they feel that they can or should be able to spoil themselves or spoil a loved one with something really special. That is why customers visit and look for products like these from



are seeing customers expecting quality as the key justifier of the price and this is something retailers will need to recalibrate and adjust to over time," says Mariam. "There is also an opportunity here to mirror purchasing expectations around alcohol across low/no offerings. For instance, like their alcoholic counterparts, non alcoholic spirits should be available at a range of price points – as an example, our whiskies range between £24 for a blended whisky alternative to £40 for an Islay whisky alternative."

The appetite for aperitifs

Brits have been inspired by the drinking habits of our European cousins – you only need to look at the recent boom in Aperol spritz culture to see there's an appetite for these bittersweet beverages – and while the iconic orange drink is an oft-seen sight around the UK in the summertime, there's undoubtedly a thirst for more when the weather cools down thanks to their relatively low alcohol content and affinity with great food.

"Aperitifs have really taken off in the UK because people are drinking more thoughtfully, and the spritz craze has played a big part. People want flavour and a bit of occasion without always reaching for heavy high proof spirits," says Richard Tring, co-founder, The Aperitivo! Co. "The spritz opened the door and now people are going beyond Aperol and Campari to discover these classic European style drinks are versatile, food friendly and perfect as a first drink of the evening."

The aperitivo fan is a considered consumer. "Our customers are curious drinkers," he says. "They want something that feels continental and sophisticated but is still easy to serve. Many are cocktail fans who enjoy mixing Negronis or Manhattans at home but we also see casual shoppers looking for a lower alcohol alternative to their usual gin or whisky. They are drawn to authenticity, quality and products with a story."

Bringing new shoppers into the fold is a simple case of education, says Richard. "Simple recipe cards showing how to make a spritz, Negroni, festive punch, or highball help customers get how to use the product which matters because not everyone is familiar with the category yet," he says.

"The aperitif/aperitivo category is still young in the UK so it is an exciting opportunity for retailers. A small well chosen range with clear serving suggestions can turn casual browsers into repeat customers. Keep it simple, if someone can make a great spritz or Negroni with just a couple of bottles they will come back for more."

WHO BUYS **WHAT?**



Age plays a part in shaping shoppers' preferences says Lauren Denyer, WSET School London educator

Younger consumers, such as Generation Z, and many millennials are showing a growing concern over their health and tend to drink less and consume drinks with less sugar. The premium no and low-alcohol beers are popular among these generations. Older drinking generations are more likely to continue consuming more than the younger generations and tend to stick to the classics, such as classic wine regions and grape varieties and more red wine (which is in global decline) around Christmas. There's growing curiosity among younger drinks consumers, especially in cities, with many seeking out more esoteric styles of wines. Fresh, organic options like natural wines, Pet Nats and orange are proving particularly popular.

a specialist fine food shop. They are not looking for something they can buy in the local supermarket but at a higher price because the local shop doesn't have the buying power of a supermarket. They are looking for something that says this is going to be better than the product you normally buy. Make sure that as a retailer you provide sufficient information to help them understand and appreciate that their expectations will be met. Talk provenance, talk ingredients, talk quality. At the end of the day most people can't afford to buy a hand-built bespoke car or designer fashion, but in the world of food and drink, speciality food and drink shops are the boutiques where something really special is actually affordable (to most) and we should promote ourselves as that.

Christmas is a time when various producers bring out specific products more targeted and focused on Christmas which is a time where the early nights and open fires create a vibe associated with rich, indulgent liqueurs. We tend to have a wider variety of items like Norfolk Nog, or Bramble and from The English Whisky Company also darker beers, like stout and darker ales. We try and organise tasting sessions where producers will offer their products for tastings and customer can sample the products. As a business with an online presence we will create hampers based around various product sets and this might include wines, beers, spirits and liqueurs.

I feel that every business will be different. Farm shops are generally far luckier than high street delis in that they have more space. They have the space for people to come and park; they have the space for people to set up tasting stations. Have somebody available who can talk about the drink and offer suggestions on how it can be used. If the drinks are better served with ice then have ice available; if you would normally add a tonic with a gin then have the tonic available – don't offer something to a customer in a way that is alien to how they would consume it. Make the experience as close as it would be if they were to drink it at home.

> "Christmas which is a time where the early nights and open fires create a vibe associated with rich, indulgent liqueurs"

STOCK CHECK

2025 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE



TWO FARMERS MEDIUM DRY CIDER

A deliciously light and crisp cider, bursting with apple flavours.
twofarmerscider.co.uk



WILD LIFE BOTANICALS NUDE

An award-winning refreshing, dry and sophisticated non-alcoholic (0.5% ABV) sparkling wine with an uplifting elixir of vitamins, minerals and botanicals.
wildlifebotanicals.co.uk



THE ENGLISH DISTILLERY THE NORFOLK NOG

Made with English Single Malt Whisky and lashings of cream, The Norfolk Nog is delicately flavoured yet decadently rich.
theenglishwhisky.co.uk



CRWST MULLED CIDER MIX

A blend of spices ideal for conjuring up a very tasty, warming mulled cider. Made with all-natural ingredients.
crwst.cymru



ST PETER'S BREWERY CHRISTMAS ALE

Brewed just once a year, this copper-coloured beer is bursting with toffee, caramel and spice.
shirefoodsofnorfolk.co.uk



LA BREWERY SPARKLING ENGLISH BLUSH KOMBUCHA

A wonderful alcohol-free alternative for celebrations, bursting with notes of strawberry, rhubarb and hops.
labrewery.co.uk



DORSET GINGER SPICED GINGER PUNCH

An intriguing and delightfully spiced ginger punch that can be served chilled or warmed up as an alternative to mulled wine.
dorsetginger.ltd



ROSEMULLION DISTILLERY DARK RUM

A 40% rum, fermented, distilled and aged in Cornwall, with a gently spiced, botanical flavour, leading to deep molasses. A super smooth, easy drinking rum.
rosemulliondistillery.com



TIPTREE MERRY CHRISTMAS

The essence of the season. Pieces of Tiptree handcrafted Christmas pudding are infused in small batch English craft rum for a moreish flavour.
tiptree.com



BELVOIR MULLED WINTER CORDIAL

Lovely warm or cold, and even poured into a glass of fizz for a Christmassy touch. Made with real fruit juice and cinnamon and nutmeg extracts.
belvoirfarm.co.uk

COMMENTATORS



MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI



NIKKI WEDGEWOOD
COTTAGE DELIGHT



EMMA MACDONALD
THE BAY TREE

VERSATILE AND FLAVOUR-PACKED

Chutneys and pickles are mainstays of fine food retailer shelves – and the time has come for them to shine

Pickles which demonstrate quality, provenance and versatility are winning fans in the fine food world. Provenance is a big sell at The Norfolk Deli, says Mark Kacary, owner, but that's not the only thing on the wish list. "Being the type of shop we are and located where we are if it had the three magic words on it "made in Norfolk" that would be a good starting point. But what I am really looking for is originality, provenance, something different to a Branston pickle. I personally like something to look different, to be a little challenging. The type of product which makes you stop and think... 'that looks interesting'. It's the handmade quality that I see in a product. I am looking for the Aston Martin hand built look and feel over the factory mass produced products.

That's not to say that innovation always wins out over tradition at The Norfolk Deli. "Based on my answer above you'd think that our shelves would be packed purely with innovative/different flavours, but we also need to consider the customer base which prefers tradition over innovation. Therefore, we do choose and stock many a traditional flavoured chutney/pickle." Ultimately, quality is the name of the game. "The fact that the ingredients list has fewer additives, or items with names you don't know how to pronounce," he says. "When we think traditional, we are thinking about products that remind people of homemade products. Therefore, a happy medium of innovation with the look and feel of something very traditional."

"It's a balance — and that's where we thrive," says Nikki Wedgewood, marketing lead at Cottage Delight. "At Cottage Delight, we've built our reputation on traditional recipes and time-honoured methods, and there's still a strong demand for those comforting, familiar flavours. But innovation is just as important. We're constantly exploring new ingredients, formats and flavour combinations that reflect evolving tastes. Our upcoming 2026 launches are a great example — they're rooted in our artisan values but inspired by global trends and modern dining habits. So, in short: shoppers want both, and we're proud to deliver both."

A flavourful adventure

While traditional flavours are perennially popular, shoppers are looking for excitement and to travel the world from their cupboards when it comes to chutneys and pickles – as well as relishing authentic flavours from closer to home. "Our range offers classic Cornish favorites and the completely unexpected," says Carly Kilbey, co-founder of The Cornish Jar who utilises locally brewed ale in her concoctions. "We are always playing around in the kitchen to find that wow blend, dreaming up seasonal surprises. Our jars have big bold flavours! Smoky, zingy, spicy, sweet and sometimes all at the same time. People went crackers over our Hot Garlic Chutney – packed full of garlic, ginger and turmeric, it has three stages of flavour: sweet, umami then hot."

"Shoppers are looking for more than just a condiment – they're seeking flavour experiences that elevate everyday meals," agrees Nikki. "Provenance, authenticity and quality ingredients remain key, but we're also seeing a growing appetite for bold, global flavours and unexpected pairings. Consumers want products that feel both indulgent and purposeful — whether that's a classic chutney made with traditional methods or a new twist that taps into trending cuisines.

A multipurpose staple

"There's been a noticeable shift in how people approach food at home. During and post-pandemic, we saw a rise in scratch cooking and a desire to make mealtimes more special – and that's stuck. Chutneys and pickles are now seen as a way to add flair and personality to a dish," explains Nikki. At the same time, shoppers are more informed and selective — they're reading labels, looking for recognisable ingredients, and supporting brands with heritage and heart. Sustainability and reduced food waste are also influencing buying decisions, with many consumers using chutneys and pickles to repurpose leftovers creatively."

Indeed, at The Bay Tree the recipes for chutneys and pickles are designed specifically so they can be utilised in a range of recipes – and this is something that Emma Macdonald, managing director, prides herself on. "It's all about the balance between sweetness and acidity," she says. "If something has a high vinegar content it can take over from the other ingredients, but by making our products slightly sweeter we make them more versatile – they add a soft, smooth flavour boost that complements rather than overwhelms."

That's not to say that The Bay Tree's range are all all-rounders – instead, each have been designed with a specific purpose in mind. "Every product is different," she says. "We have products that we advise people to serve with cheese, others that are delicious in a marinade or dip, those that work in ragus and other slow-cooked dishes." The menu provided by a boost from savoury preserves is wide, varied and exciting.

Emma's culinary training has no doubt inspired the business's experimental take on chutneys and preserves. "Our motto is 'make the ordinary extraordinary,' so while some may find our products a bit sweet that's because they're not just designed to be served with cheese – they're made to add something special to everyday meals."

"I can see chutneys and relishes used in a number of ways including using them as part of a flavouring process for cooking, but I do believe that the majority of our customer remain very traditional in how they use these products," says Mark. "Cheeseboards, charcuteries boards and in sandwiches are still many people's preferred uses for chutneys and relishes."

"In 2025 real chutney lovers aren't looking for a jar to sit in the back of a cupboard, they are asking: Is it bold? Is it versatile? Is it fun? People want to be surprised and they want a jar that earns its place on the table," says Carly. "We love it when we hear about our chutneys being used in unexpected ways – one of our









favourite stockists, a dreamy and tiny wine bar, told us about a cocktail they made with our Chilli Jam. A baker that folds our Apple & Cider Chutney into their sausage rolls, a vegan salad dressing that is wiped up with our spiced apple and walnut chutney."

A staple worth investing in

It's all too easy to let your chutney and pickle selection sit quietly while other sections of your store benefit from attention – they're always going to sell, after all, and their shelf life tends to be pretty safe – but by doing so you're missing a potentially valuable opportunity. It's well worth investing some time into perfecting your selection, tailoring it to your audience, and being smart about how you promote it to provide another point of difference from the supermarkets.

"A well-curated range of chutneys and pickles can be a real point of difference for independents," says Nikki. "These products encourage basket spend and lend themselves to cross-merchandising. They also tell a story – especially when they come from a trusted artisan producer like Cottage Delight. Stocking a mix of traditional bestsellers and trend-led innovations allows retailers to cater to a broad customer base, from loyal locals to curious foodies."

HOW TO SELL CHUTNEYS AND PICKLES



Nikki Wedgewood, marketing lead at Cottage Delight, shares her retail tips

- **STORYTELLING IS KEY**
  We recommend creating themed displays that highlight usage occasions — think 'Perfect Pairings for Cheese Night'
- **SAMPLING**
  Where possible, is a powerful tool, we provide free point of sale material to support either manned or 'silent' tastings
- **POSITIONING CHUTNEYS AND PICKLES NEAR COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCTS**
  Like crackers, charcuterie, or wine — encourages impulse buys
- **DON'T UNDERESTIMATE SEASONALITY:**
  chutneys and pickles make fantastic gifts, so they deserve a spot in festive and foodie gifting displays year-round



STOCK CHECK



THE CORNISH JAR HOT GARLIC CHUTNEY
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thecornishjar.com



THE BAY TREE SPICY TOMATO & CARAMELISED ONION CHUTNEY
The Bay Tree's most popular chutney – the perfect balance of tang, spice and sweetness and deliciously versatile.
thebaytree.co.uk



SNOWDONIA PEAR, DATE & COGNAC CHUTNEY
A seductively sweet combination of snow pears, aromatic cognac and slowly ripened dates.
snowdoniacheese.co.uk



RADNOR PRESERVES WELSH CIDER & LEEK CHUTNEY
A celebration of the Welsh larder, this delicious chutney combines Hallet's Cider, apples and leeks. Fabulous with Welsh rarebit, pork pies and sausage rolls.
radnorpreserves.com



COTTAGE DELIGHT MANGO & AUBERGINE CHUTNEY
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cottagedelight.co.uk



CROOKED PICKLE CO SPRING VEG CHILLILILLI
Piccalilli with punch. Packed with fresh, crunchy veg, this wakens the senses with a generous dose of fruity habanero.
crookedpickle.co



DRIVERS PICKLES SPICY CALYPSO CHUTNEY
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pickle-lovers.co.uk



THE GARLIC FARM RED ONION RELISH WITH JALAPENO & GARLIC
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THE BIG CHRISTMAS CHEESE CHECKLIST

Get ahead now to prepare for the busy festive selling season

COMMENTATORS



CAMILLA MARSHALL LOVSEY
THE CAMBRIDGE CHEESE COMPANY



STEVE PARKER
CHEESE EXPERT AND AUTHOR



NICK BIRCHALL
THE CHEESE SHOP, NANTWICH





At Speciality Food we're delighted that cheese has become such a focal point of consumers' dining occasions in the last two years.

Whether strewn across a board with crackers, fruit and chutney as part of a grazing platter, bubbled on a stove into a fondue, or wheeled out in great hunks for cheese tasting dinner parties – it's become a massive part of the 'eating in' trend.

Retailers report a whole new, younger demographic visiting their stores throughout the year. Could this translate into a bumper Christmas in 2025? It's very possible.

As readers will know, December is always naturally the busiest time for selling, so, with new potential customers in the mix this season, it pays to get ahead.

We spoke to some of the UK's cheese experts and retailers to find out what helps them thrive through Christmas trading. Let us guide you with their handy checklist.

Stock up

Make sure you have enough cheese, and that if you haven't already done so, you're ordering now. With certain cheeses from Europe off the cards this Christmas due to Lumpy Skin Disease, there's more pressure than usual on cheesemakers to deliver this year.

Camilla Marshall Lovsey at The Cambridge Cheese Company says the team significantly increases the shop's range in the weeks leading to Christmas, introducing new products from late September, giving customers a chance to discover and taste them in a more relaxed environment.

"Many of our customers return year after year (of not week after week) so stocking exciting, new goodies is key to keeping interest. We're also dedicated to seasonality, so our range changes with the months of the year, and many of our favourites are winter made cheeses, so their return is often much anticipated by staff and customers alike."

Staff are always astounded, she adds, by the volume of cheese that flies out the door in the two weeks before Christmas. "It's at least 20 times what we would sell during a sunny summer's day. To say our walk-in fridge and cheese decks are full to the brim would be an understatement!"

Cheese expert, author and judge, Steve Parker, reminds retailers to exercise caution when it comes to novelty varieties – particularly in a speciality, artisan setting. "There's a temptation to get lots of novelty cheeses, when 90% of customers are coming in asking for Brie, Cheddar and Stilton. Make sure you have lots of those in stock. During my first Christmas in my shop I was staggered. You won't see some customers all year, then suddenly they come in wanting a 3kg wheel of Brie. For me, it's not the time to experiment."

Pay attention to trends

What cheese lovers want changes all the time, especially today, when social media influencers can swifty turn public opinion on a dime – just look at the rise to stardom of cottage cheese.

As well as your trusted customer favourites and classics, it is worth dipping your toes into trends, provided you market and promote anything new effectively so it doesn't end up stuck in the counter.

Nick Birchall of The Cheese Shop in Nantwich says indulgence is something everyone should be thinking about when planning their Christmas cheese counters. "Anything with truffle will fly out, like Truffled Baron Bigod – load those up. Also creamy, rich, fatty cheeses like Delice de Bourgogne.

"We get in lots of Alp Blossom because it's pretty, and people like it. Another lovely one for Christmas is Drunken Monk from Belgium. And, for goodness sake, get lots of boozy cheese in. We have a great goats' cheese from Spain, washed in Oloroso sherry. It's absolutely drenched in sherry and a really big hit for us."

Individual cheeses should be a consideration at Christmas as well – ideal for gifting. "Those baby Baron Bigods or baby Stinking Bishops are fab. You don't need to spend time cutting them up."

"We've noticed a tangible shift towards buying sustainably made, ethical cheeses, as well as those either made or matured locally," says Camilla. "More customers than ever want to hear about the back story of each cheese, the dairy, how the animals are living, and what they eat."

As well as a focus on these types of cheeses this year, Camilla thinks it's worth, if you have space, practising the art of affinage on site to offer your customers something truly different and unique. "We are lucky enough to have a vast cellar underneath our shop in which we mature our entire range of cheese. We also mature about a dozen very exclusive cheeses for Christmas for three to five years, which become our festive specials and instantly become best-sellers. Our famous Dragon Slayer, Cambridge Gumburner and festive Old Weydeland change in flavour year on year but are always favourites."

Make those displays sing

We all eat with our eyes. And bountiful, alluring displays both in the window and inside your shop will guide shoppers through your door. The Cambridge Cheese Company changes every inch of retail space as December approaches. "This is partly to make space for our new lines, but it also encourages customers to discover new parts of the shop which they might not have ventured to before," says Camilla. "So many get mesmerised by the soft cheese deck at the front that they never even make it to the back section, which is filled with treasure too."

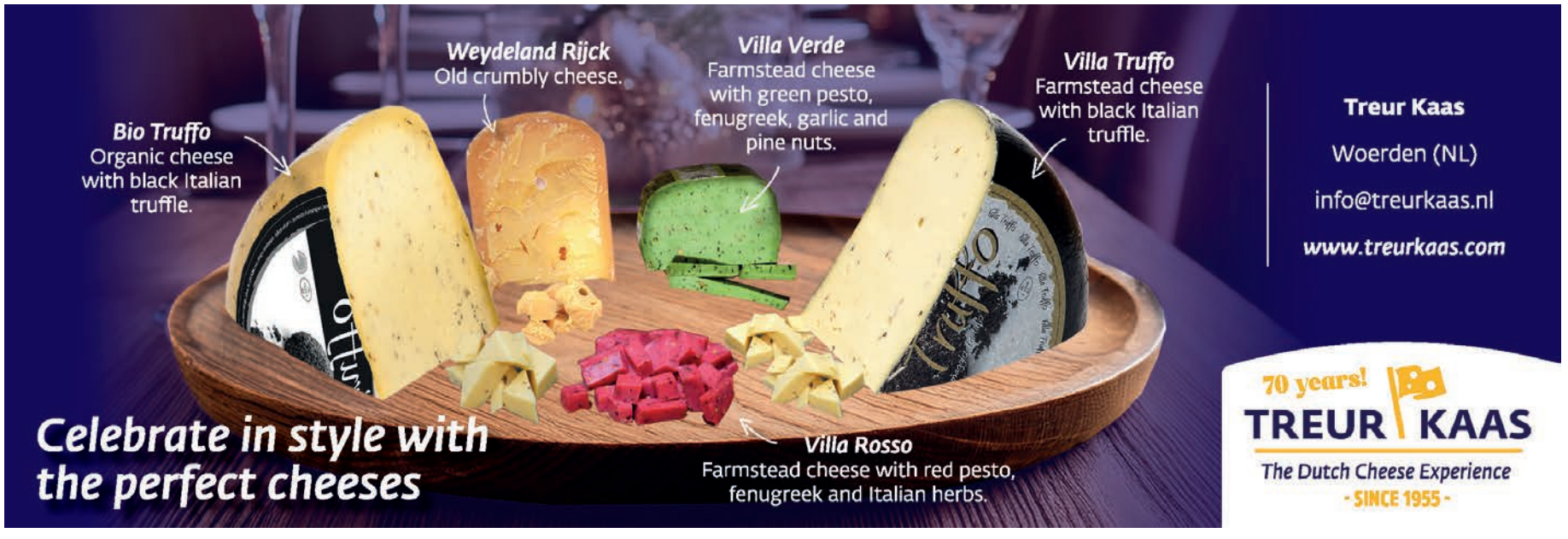
The shop's interior and window displays, she adds, are designed to give shoppers ideas of how to build hampers or create interesting food gifts.

Nick says his shop's counters will be "groaning" under the weight of cheese, and thinks demonstrating an extended collection in your displays is a fantastic way to attract customers new and old. In terms of decor, they like to keep it simple. "We have a huge, and I mean huge, 5ft wreath in the window, but we don't tend to put too many Christmassy things around the cheese, because they can take over. Our door is beautiful, with a big swag outside, but in the shop, we want to keep those nice clean lines."

Manage staffing now

The biggest mistake cheesemongers make (usually those newer to the industry) is underestimating staffing at Christmas, says Steve. "Think about it now – don't wait until the third week of November to put an ad in the window. Uni students are home at the moment, get them signed up now, and try to do advance training if you can, so they know how to pronounce, cut and serve the cheeses."

Work out which day of the week Christmas falls on (which he admits sounds silly) now too, Steve says. "Be on top of those rotas, because everyone who works for you is going to want to go Christmas shopping at some point. You can't expect them to be available every day from the 18th



to 24th of December. I used to publish my rota in September so staff knew what they were doing."

Plan for additional staff between Christmas and New Year as well – when a lot of restocking will need to be done.

Nick invests in a band of merry 'Christmas elves' to help operations run smoothly in December. "We've got a good team of existing counter staff who all know they're going to be busy the week before Christmas," he explains, "then we have a specialist Christmas team working upstairs, wrapping all the hampers. Wrapping takes forever and having those three ladies come in makes all the difference."

Give customers a taste of Christmas

You might start holding back on regular tasting events as the cooler months roll in, but don't give up on special events or tastings completely, our experts say. They can help you fill orders much earlier in advance.

"It's of colossal importance to open orders early," says Camilla. "This helps us manage our staff levels, ensure we have enough stock, and gives customers the confidence that we are prepared, organised and will get them exactly what they need, when they need it!" She continues. "We take so much joy in talking about our products to customers and allowing them to try as much as they can eat while they visit. It's hard to give an extensive description and endless samples when the shop is packed, so allowing customers to learn what they love in advance is helpful for them and us, and ensures they head home with the cheeseboard of their dreams for Christmas Day."

Most of The Cheese Shop Nantwich's events halt ahead of Christmas, though they do have some tricks up their sleeves, Nick says, including Christmas cheese and wine pairings in November and early December. "We get lots of sales from those. We'll have guest cheesemakers in every weekend in November and December, showcasing their cheeses, so people can sample them and get their orders in. The we need the room to start making up those hampers!"

Keep that Christmas queue happy

On the whole, cheese lovers are quite content to queue for an hour or two to collect their annual haul – some even consider it a kind of urban sport, laughs Steve, regaling others with how long they've committed themselves to this very British pastime.

Handing out samples is imperative to keep spirits high. "I was lucky to have a big shop, so the queue would be inside, and my role was to make sure I spoke to every customer," Steve says. "We'd hand out cheese samples, and open a bottle of something, pouring out little cups, saying sorry for the wait. Offer people a drink and they'll love you. If you're lucky, they'll buy wine too when they get to the counter!"

Nick says he and the team 'queue comb'. As soon as the door opens, they call out to see if anyone's got a pre-order. If so, they're brought to the front so they can pay separately and get out, without queuing. "We use a separate card machine so we can take payment for everything that's already made up."

The average queue time at Christmas at The Cheese Shop is around an hour, and Nick has to remind staff to pace service gently, giving the same traditional service they're known for year-round. After all, for some this will be their sole visit to the shop in the year. "I always say to them, 'for goodness sake, don't look out the window because you'll panic. Concentrate on the person in front of you. Be mindful of time you're spending with them, but don't rush them through. You've got to create that excitement and level of customer support'."

It's a fine balance, he admits. "Every customer is different, and

FESTIVE **UPSELLS**

There are some products which sell themselves in the festive fever of Christmas, but they're still worth giving a little nudge.

Nick recommends stocking up on truffled honey, which is "huge" for his customers, as are the custom cheeseboards he has made for the shop. "People rather like them. We have our known cheese knife sets too, which sell well. I also like to have a good range of wines, sherries and Port at this time of year, and we do a Port tasting in November which helps fill up the order books."

Chutneys and preserves from Galloway Lodge in Scotland and Cumbria's Wild & Fruitful strike a chord with the shop's customers, who love their own-branded Nantwich Chutney.

Don't overdo it with anything that explicitly labels itself as 'Christmas' or 'festive', though, Nick adds. "Nobody wants Christmas chutney in January. Last year I had one jar of chutney and one jar of figgy pudding jam left. I'd got it just about right." It's often better, he thinks, to up your stocks of fig jams, membrillo and fruit jellies, which will sell throughout the year and have a long shelf life.

Camilla says in Cambridge they get through jar after jar of cherry puree, which customers adore pairing with soft goats' or ewe's milk cheeses. "It's now one of our bestselling items. We're also big fans of balsamic jelly, which offers something a little more zingy and interesting than your standard jelly."

She agrees with Nick that honey is a must. "They're a brilliant match for cheese, helping to bring out herbaceous notes as well as balancing acidity or salinity, so they make for a versatile and delicious pairing."

Steve says everyone wants pickled walnuts in December, so be sure to have a few (but not too many) jars ready. "Other than that, it's all about luxury. Selling your luxury chutneys and luxury crackers alongside the everyday ranges. It's a good time as well to think about gifting. Offer cheese slates, cheese knives, little cheese plates or mice place holders. I'm finding that people are wanting something different when it comes to gifts, and they're being drawn more to experiences. For example, if you come and see me at Chiswick Cheese Market and pay £45, I'll give you a tote bag, one of my books and a voucher you can take to any Big Wheel Cheese stall and pick up some cheese, chutney and crackers. That's an ideal gift. People love it. It's interactive."



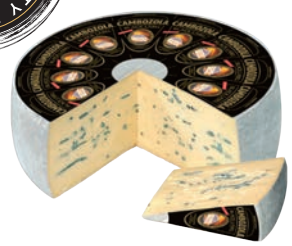
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every member of staff works slightly differently. The main thing is to be polite, and always, always wish them a happy Christmas. It's meant to be a jolly time, but people get so stressed rushing around. We want to make their experience with us as pleasurable as possible."

Finally, says Camilla, smile! "Team morale is the number one priority at Christmas, as this is what most heavily affects customer experience. We all feel so lucky to be cheesemongers, working in such an extraordinary shop, and every member of our tiny team is passionate and enthusiastic, so we're confident in our service. We hope that our positivity can brighten the days of even the busiest customer, and a queue isn't so bad when they leave with a bag of delicious, artisan cheese!"

Plan for 'betwixtmas'

The funny period between Christmas Day and New Year's Eve can be quite discombobulating ("what day is it again?") but in the world of cheese it's essential (after the turkey's eaten, the Port downed) to do a shop reset, ready for everyone's party plans.

Nick says he always keeps a bit of stock back for after Boxing Day, ready for New Year's Eve. "We have a tick list database of all the cheeses. When they come in we tick off how much of each cheese is needed for pre-orders, take those off, then split the cellar in two. One set of shelves is for orders, and another set is for the shop so we're not pinching someone's Christmas cheese – we try not to rob Peter to pay Paul – and we plan in fresh cheese deliveries after Boxing Day so we're ready to go when we open."

WHOLESALER'S **PERSPECTIVE**



Paul Heasman, purchasing coordinator at Rowcliffe, shares his thoughts on Christmas cheese buying in 2025

"Christmas for Rowcliffe is always focused around the classics, with a few modern-day twists. We are finding that more people don't want to take chances with their Christmas cheeseboard, and trade up through established artisan favourites that offer a broad variety of types and experiences.

"Colston Bassett Stilton, Blue Shropshire, Baron Bigod, Le Cret Gruyere and Rosary goats' cheese are still solid cornerstones. And Alpine cheeses remain strong players, hitting the ongoing trend for hot eating.

"While we anticipate good spending over the Christmas period, speciality cheeses offer a range of sizes that allow more price conscious customers to seek out smaller portions – something our newly launched 'Rowcliffe Presents' range offers. Waxed cheeses will feature heavily as ever, which we have fulfilled with our Rolling Cheese Co truckles.

"The Christmas period continues to be a time when people want to treat themselves and others, and artisan cheese falls right into that. We are also seeing artisan cheese being used in different ways. It's no longer a cheeseboard staple, but commonly featured in canapes, hot snacks and innovative recipes."



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DARING TO DIVERSIFY:

‘WE’RE ATTRACTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SHOPPERS’

As part of our series chatting with the people behind bold and exciting farm shop, deli and food hall projects, we head to Tillingham in East Sussex



The most joyful thing about Britain’s farm shops is their diversity. Like fingerprints, no two are the same. While you know exactly what you’re going to find in identikit multiples, as you step over the threshold of a farm shop or food hall, the magic is in the discovery. Of home-reared meat. The freshest vegetables, recently plucked from the ground, still dusty with soil. Cakes baked on site. Local produce, carefully chosen from small independents.

Some farm shops are rustic ‘side of the road’ jobs. A way to generate extra profit from surplus milk, eggs or fruits. At the other end of the scale, are huge, multi-purpose operations, skillfully combining growing and rearing with retail, on-site dining, family attractions, and so much more.

The Covid pandemic proved to bolster the popularity of the farm shop experience. As, often, the only port of call at the time for essentials, they were introduced to a whole new audience of shoppers – many of whom have stayed loyal, continuing to champion what’s ‘on their doorstep’.

Bucolic Tillingham is part of a new-gen wave of farm shops appealing to this younger crowd, according to marketing manager Nikki Cochrane, who says the estate, and what it has to offer (from shopping, to its own wine and vineyard tours, and dining) has exploded in popularity amongst the 25 to 35-year-old crowd, who, she’s told, have more often than not been lured to East Sussex by Instagram or TikTok content.

“The demographic is more mixed than I could ever have imagined really,” she says. “It’s definitely ‘Insta-friendly’ which has helped, and we’re finding younger people are becoming more interested in wine, and they’re looking for more sustainable restaurants.”

Head of wine, Tierney Beames, adds, “Covid, and Brexit created the perfect storm for people seeking an experience. The thing about not being able to travel so easily post-Covid was that it created a real spike in English wine tourism. When people were allowed to move again freely, but travel was restricted to the UK, it was an interesting shift.”

At the time of writing, Tillingham farm has a small shop selling its own wines, and homemade pickles and sauces made using produce from the kitchen garden, with a larger farm shop due to open imminently, enhancing an already strong offering. “We’ll be selling our own lamb and lots more,” reveals Nikki. “We’ve got big ambitions, and we’re super excited.”

The Tillingham Estate is owned by Lord and Lady Davenport, who were impressed, in 2017, by Tierney’s vision to develop part of their land into a biodynamic vineyard.

“There wasn’t much on the land other than derelict buildings,” explains Nikki, “and in the middle there was an old Dutch Barn. In the original plans that was going to be removed, but a designer came in and worked with them and actually convinced them to keep it, which was definitely the right idea.”

The operation centres around the barn, oast house, restaurant and vineyard, with vines planted in 2017, and the gates flung open to the public in 2019...just a few months before Covid struck.

Late summer/early autumn 2024 will be an exciting time for Tierney, who has been waiting patiently for seven years, for the estate’s vineyard to come to full fruition, having relied until now (as all vineyards do) on bottling wines blended using grapes from other wineries in order to kickstart production.

“Last year was the tipping point for the vineyard,” he says. “Each vine produces a bit of fruit each year until it matures at eight years. We are at year seven, so we’ve had to buy some wine in, but this year is the first year we’ve been able to use our own grapes - it’s 50 tonnes from Tillingham, and 20 tonnes bought in. I’m hoping that for the 2024 vintage it will be all Tillingham’s wine.”

As the climate evolves, with milder weather experienced especially in the East, Southeast and Western parts of the UK, vineyards are becoming commonplace, with the industry here having been utterly transformed from what used to be thought of as a novelty, hobbyist endeavour, to big business. Some of France’s top-flight makers have even started investing in English plots.

To farmers with shops thinking about diversifying into winemaking, Tierney jokes “it’s a great way to turn a big fortune into a small one”. He adds, though, that with proper planning, knowing you’re in it for the long haul, producing wine could prove lucrative in the future.

“You’ve got to think about what the climate is going to be like in 20 years. Plan for that rather than the now. That’s something people are realising and being caught out at the moment. The climate is changing more rapidly than anyone ever expected.”

It’s also “very important”, more important than soil quality, to consider your site and location, he adds. “It does need to be well exposed and ventilated. If you’ve got a damp site you’re going to struggle. England is famously wet, and humidity in









a vineyard leads to mildew. You definitely don't want to be growing on a North-facing hillside!"

Tillingham is clay over a sandy loam, and "quite different from the landscape most people think of with English sparkling wine," says Tierney. "That leans us to being a bit better suited to still wines. There's more richness to the fruit. At the moment we're producing 60% still, and 40% sparkling."

The farm estate runs to 70 acres, with around 25 of those laid to vineyard across six plots, a few of which are sub-divided, to deliver 21 varieties of grape. It is, Tierney admits, quite an unconventional approach, but one that ensures they can experiment on an ongoing basis, and adapt to what the climate throws at them without putting all their eggs in one basket. "It's nice to have a safety net weather-wise. We've got the classics, like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and hybrids, but also lots of Germanic vines which crop a little more safely and reliably. You've got to have a really good year to harvest Chardonnay and Pinot, and if you get a bad year you can end up with nothing!"

There is a traditional method sparkler for customers to enjoy, though Tierney crafts the estate's with a 50/50 Meunier and Chardonnay blend, doing away with Pinot Noir. Also on the fizzy side is a Veneto-region style Colfondo, alongside a variety of still wines, rose, a little red, and some blushed skin contact wines landing later this year.

An interesting prospect, then, for visitors, who have plenty of choice at tastings and tours, which run throughout the week. Alongside visiting the vineyard, and sampling wine, these guests also get the chance to appreciate the natural beauty of the landscape. A landscape of grazing sheep, woodland and wildflowers.

> "It's definitely 'Insta-friendly' which has helped, and we're finding younger people are becoming more interested in wine, and they're looking for more sustainable restaurants"

This is all complimented by the rest of what the site has to offer – including accommodation and a restaurant. "So many vineyards have tasting rooms, but that's the extent of it," says Tierney. "They act as a bit of a crutch – another way to generate footfall. But here, we offer the complete package. You can experience sitting in a restaurant, at the vineyard your wine came from, and can stay for the night. There's not many other places in the UK where you can do that."

Any farm shop operator will tell you having a catering arm is challenging, but can do wonders for footfall, and that's certainly been the case at Tillingham, whose restaurant plays a crucial part in its success, drawing diners from far and wide – not just those visiting the vineyard.

The restaurant menu is hinged on what's looking at its best in the walled garden, estate lamb, hogget or mutton, and seasonal, local produce, with a five to six course set tasting-style menu offered in the evenings alongside wine flights and pairings. Its dedication to sustainable practices and sourcing has earned the eatery a Michelin Green Star – one of only 23 in the UK and Ireland.

"They really take into account your systems and the way you work," Nikki says. "So, we have our wine in kegs on draft rather than in bottles in the restaurant, and we send the kegs back to the company to make new kegs. It's a closed loop system. Our garden is organic and natural. We make compost from garden waste, and the sheep's wool is used for mulch. We're all about farming and growing biodynamically, and using natural farming methods, like putting in mixed cover crops for the soil, and pollinators for insects. It's a lovely thing to be a part of."

As is the accommodation, which has proved very popular with those city dwellers wanting to breathe in fresh country air on a staycation. Tillingham offers 11 rooms and two bell tents with "the most beautiful views over the oast house or the vineyard" says Nikki.

Although they are appointed with all the creature comforts today's travellers (especially those wanting to impress on the 'gram) could desire, the team made a conscious decision not to include TVs in rooms.

"We think coming to a place like this should almost be a bit of a digital detox," Nikki explains. "When people come to stay here, we want them to be at one with nature, and mindful of the setting and the land."

The spaces are the concept of local designer McCully & Crane "who have made a name for themselves and have a similar audience to us," says Nikki. "So that makes them a bit of a draw as well. They came in at the beginning when the restaurant was being designed and did all the interiors. But now our guest services manager looks after them. She takes a lot of care over how they look. She's a bit like the style police – if there is a chair she doesn't like, she will block it," Nikki smiles. "Everything here is considered. There's a lot of vintage, and that gives us a real appeal with the kind of audience we attract."

All these little touches make the estate "a vibrant, really nice place to be" Nikki adds, saying other farm shops and farm sites shouldn't underestimate the buying power and social power of newer, younger shoppers. They are the future, but they are also spending now, and constantly searching for unique opportunities to buy, eat and experience innovative, exciting British food and drink.







CHEESE TOURISM

BOOMS IN BRITAIN

Food lovers across the UK are more interested in where their cheese comes from than ever before

Since the Covid lockdowns there's been a notable shift in the way Brits spend their money – and their leisure time. Consumers, especially Millennials and Gen-Z, crave experiences, storytelling and 'realness' above all else in a world increasingly driven by influencers, AI and living online.

This has led to a boom in British agritourism, with the IMARC Group predicting the market for on-farm experiences will grow from $73.2 billion in 2024, to $205.6 billion by 2033, and Grand View Research expecting a CAGR rate of 11.9% between 2025 and 2030.

From farm stays and farm visits, to PYO and wine and cider tours, the growing agritourism sector gives the public access to authentic, tangible moments, often with sustainability (something else they value) playing a central role.

A burgeoning market in the industry is cheese tourism, with more and more cheesemakers opening their doors, warmly welcoming customers and giving them a window into their worlds.

QUICKE'S, DEVON

EXPERIENCE: CHEESE TOURS

Quicke's launched its cheese tours a decade ago in a bid to share its story with a wider audience, says Rachael Kinsella from the maker's marketing team. "The tours give our visitors the chance to see the fields where our cows graze, step inside our cheese dairy, explore our ageing rooms, and enjoy a guided tasting of our handcrafted clothbound cheeses."

They're a brilliant way, Rachael adds, to connect visitors more deeply not only with the food they eat, but also with the cheesemaking process.



"Now, more than ever, people are curious about where their food comes from, and we love offering this behind-the-scenes experience," she adds, saying the tours are an "incredibly powerful" sales tool as well. "Every time we do a show, we get people coming up to us to say that they visited our farm on a cheese tour and have been buying Quicke's cheese ever since!"

Tour attendees are always delighted to meet 14th generation Quicke, Mary, when they arrive, who gives a talk, before they're taken to the cheesemaking rooms, where they can sample Quicke's cheeses at all stages, from fresh curds, to young Cheddars. The tour also includes a visit to the ageing rooms, where cheeses mature for up to two years, followed by a talk from one of the farm team and the chance to visit cows grazing nearby.

"Last, but by no means least," adds Rachael, "there's a guided tasting of our range of handcrafted, clothbound cheeses. The experience is rounded off with lunch just down the road at the Beer Engine pub."

Cheese tours at Quicke's have become so popular the team adds more dates each year, running from April to September, when the weather is usually on their side. "This not only makes for a much more enjoyable walk," Rachael explains, "but also means we can welcome visitors who are holidaying in the South West during the peak tourist season."

She heartily recommends other cheesemakers jumping on the agritourism train. "It's a fantastic way for people to connect with the craft, understand the care and skill that goes into every cheese, and appreciate the story behind the product. Visitors love to see, smell and taste the process in action. It really does build brand loyalty, inspires word-of-mouth, and can create lifelong customers."

STEVE PARKER CHEESE & WINE, LONDON

EXPERIENCE: BIG CHEESE WALKS

"I have, over the years, realised that people prefer experiences to gifts," says cheese expert and author, Steve Parker. "If I said to you, 'what did your brother or sister buy you for Christmas three years ago?' you'd probably have no idea, but if I said, 'do you remember that theatre tour you did at Drury Lane?' you'll remember it."

Experiences, and the act of sharing and talking about food, bring people together, Steve adds. "And it also became abundantly clear to me, when I opened my cheese shop, that people love cheese. They almost have quite a weird obsession with it."

Understanding these three things led Steve to launch his Big Cheese





INSIDERS' ADVICE

Thinking about opening a cheese experience? Here's what the experts already doing it have to say.

Rachael Kinsella, Quicke's: "Our advice would be to keep group sizes manageable so everyone can ask questions and feel involved, make the people on the tour feel special - they have potentially been looking forward to their visit for months and we really do want them to come away having had an enjoyable and educational time."

Suzie Birrell-Gray, Abbey Farm Cottage: "Go for it. You meet some really interesting people who are looking at what they are eating and want to know what they're putting in their mouths. You can bridge that gap."

Allison Raper, Teesdale Cheesemakers: "Absolutely do it. Speak to your EHO and make sure there are no concerns there – it helps to have a good relationship with them. I'd say offering an experience does generate brand loyalty, and people will come back again and again. We have regular visitors to the cafe who now come here to buy our cheeses and do a tour because they've experienced a cheesemaking day with us. Also, because of what we do, we get a lot of word-of-mouth visitors from the glamping side. We find this a great way to market ourselves to people."

Claire Burt, Burt's Cheese: "I think they are a great way to showcase products and so customers can see what you do and really connect with your products. We're a small dairy, so having a separate classroom works well for us, hygiene-wise. That's definitely a consideration. It's quite functional, but people are there to learn."

Steve Saunders, High Weald Dairy: "It pays to understand your customers, your story, and the core of your business. When you're doing tours, every one should be individual and different. I would also say we learn a lot from our customers. If we're doing something new, we can trial it on them and gain realtime feedback which is very valuable."

Sandra Bell, Wensleydale Creamery: "We're very fortunate that our Wensleydale Creamery Visitor Centre was built on such a strong foundation. For other cheesemakers looking to expand their business in this way, it's important to understand that it's not something they will necessarily see immediate fame from. It ultimately comes down to offering something valuable to visitors. If there are a number of similar experiences in the area then you may not have enough to stand out from the crowd. Having the local community on your side is also key. When it comes to starting out, your initial visitors are likely to come from those in closer proximity, and they can be a really useful tool in spreading the word about the experience."

Walk series, with a choice of three starting points in London – Chelsea, The City, and the West End. "What I'm doing," he explains, "is taking people on an expertly curated and expertly guided tour. We meet in a really nice venue where I buy you coffee or tea, then I give you your own personal cheese-tasting kit – a bright yellow cold bag, a small cheeseboard, knife, wet wipes, a bottle of water, pack of Peter's Yard crackers, waxed paper and a copy of my British Cheese Notebook."

The tour then heads off, visiting four to five cheesemongers or delis, where visitors can try samples before Steve buys some cheese - "always British, with only one exception" - before sitting down nearby, cutting up and communally sharing the purchases, as he talks about each variety.





"Along the way there's a lot of history and background. So at Neal's Yard Dairy I can explain how John Cleese was one of the first people to go there. We walk past where weddings in Bridgerton took place, and where the first iron curtain was installed in London" he adds, saying that people enjoy his knowledge not only of the areas they visit, but of the cheeses and cheesemakers. "None of it is scripted. It's just me talking. I can tell people about how cheese judging works, why one cheese is considered better than another, why Shropshire Blue is orange. I'm confident I can answer pretty much anything!"

Held in small groups, the tours are two hours long, and a maximum of two miles. They end at a final venue where everyone can tuck into a cheeseboard with a drink. The experiences attract lots of tourists from outside of London, as well as food enthusiasts, Steve says.

"I love it. I love the fact people will learn something new on every walk. I see it as taking friends out to share my knowledge rather than being a tour guide."

ABBEY FARM COTTAGE, NORTH YORKSHIRE

EXPERIENCE: CHEESEMAKING

Suzie and Jonty Birrell-Gray moved to the North York Moors in 2019 to pursue their dream of making artisan cheeses and farming sustainably. Today, as well as making award-winning Rosedale Goats' Cheese, they offer cheesemaking days and weekends, to "impart our knowledge and help people realise they can make cheese at home using everyday equipment", Suzie says.

A typical day begins with a hot drink and introductions, before cracking on with the business of heating the farm's raw goats' milk to pasteurisation, giving it time to cool down for use later.

"Then we kick off with a feta and get that going, moving onto a halloumi. At the end of the day everyone ends up with a feta, halloumi, chevre, ricotta and labneh. We swap and change between the different stages throughout the day, stopping for a break at lunchtime with a talk on our cheeses, going back into cheesemaking afterwards."

In the early afternoon visitors experience a tutored tasting of the farm's cheeses, before heading home with a "party bag" of what they've made and a recipe card.

"We do weekends as well because we have accommodation," adds Suzie. "You can do a goat experience on the Friday, cheesemaking on Saturday, and goat yoga on a Sunday! We offer that one weekend a month."

Uptake, she says, has been "phenomenal". "A group of friends who came recently adored it. They didn't expect what they got and how much food was included. They thought they were getting a light lunch – my husband doesn't 'do' light lunches!"

Showing people how to use what they've already got in their kitchens at home to make cheese is a big part of the appeal, Suzie thinks. "They love knowing they can use the skills they've learnt straight away. We often get pictures from people of what they've done, and we encourage that."

Being able to try something different also feeds into the cheesemaking experience's popularity. "People want to get out and do new activities, and they want to know the provenance of their food," Suzie explains. "It's dead simple to make halloumi if you know how. It can be made on a Wednesday and eaten the next day. Although we use raw milk, we do give lots of tips of how to use what you can get from the supermarket. I have to say, people are shocked when they taste our milk. Everyone thinks goats' milk will be disgusting but it's not – it's fresh and clean, that's one of the biggest surprises for them."



TEESDALE CHEESEMAKERS, COUNTY DURHAM

EXPERIENCE: CHEESEMAKING, CHEESE CAFE, TOURS AND TASTINGS, GLAMPING

The seed for cheese experiences at Teesdale was planted during the Covid years, says Allison Raper, who founded the business with her husband Jonathan. "During Covid, when people couldn't travel and we didn't have our glamping lodges open, we did tastings via Zoom. We sent out boxes and held online tastings and cheese parties. It just felt like that's what people wanted to do – to have experiences – and that's continued."

Both Allison and Jonathan feel consumers are done with "stuff". "You certainly come to a point in your life where you don't really need anything and don't want to consume as much. Even young people are feeling that way. When we opened the lodges, also having our cheese cafe, we felt like we could create this hub for cheese – it's the core of our business and it felt natural to expand from cheesemaking to tours and tastings. Also, doing this has made us a destination for cheese. We're in the middle of nowhere. You wouldn't just come here for a cup of coffee!"



Interestingly, despite being busy, Allison says they've cut back on staff at the farm because they personally felt they were losing touch with the customers. "We've pulled it right back so we can be properly involved, doing a tour and tasting one Saturday a month, apart from the glampers who can book one during their stay."

Visitors learn how cheese is made, and go through a tutored cheese and food pairing with a glass of wine. "That's really nice because, as a consequence, people go home better informed how to put a cheeseboard together in terms of balance. The tasting used to be a separate thing, but since we've put it together we the tour, we've doubled our sales."

Those who really really adore cheese will sign up for the maker's cheesemaking days where activities include pricking a blue cheese, and



assisting making cheeses, as Allison talks through what to look and feel for, waxing and turning cheeses. "It's very hands-on and interactive."

Three glamping units are in situ on the 20 acre site. Allison says they could easily expand, but have no plans to. "You can kill a golden goose," she laughs, revealing that the appeal of their business is its rural location and peace. "It's just a lovely place to come for a quiet cheesy weekend!"

All kinds of customers find their way to Teesdale, she continues. "We thought it would be middle-aged, affluent people, because we make artisan cheese, by hand, in small batches – it's not cheap. But we're actually seeing quite a lot of young people and that's interesting. Part of that might be because we're adult only. We're a quiet idyll over the hill where people can unplug and recharge with cheese during the day, and a wood-fired hot tub in the evening."

Allison thinks consumers today are getting "jaded" by all the marketing thrown at them – seeing commercialism and online lives as being the major reasons for the agritourism boom. "People are craving authenticity. We source our milk from the family farm, our cheese is made and matured here, they can get a real taste of the local area here. People want something they can touch, feel and smell - ingredients with provenance and connection. Everyone who comes here enjoys it, and we get them coming back again and again. One couple has visited us three times this year so far!"

There is definitely a sense of 'use it or lose it' she feels, especially as lots of hospitality destinations close their doors. "People who enjoy what we do, want to support us, and that's lovely."



BURT'S CHEESE, CHESHIRE

EXPERIENCE: CHEESEMAKING

Burt's Cheese founder, Claire Burt, says she relishes being able to teach others the art of cheesemaking during her courses - especially as she gets to see firsthand the spark in their eyes as they realise the connection between what they buy and where it comes from.

"I think dairy still has a little bit of magic around it," she says. "It's not something you necessarily would know how to make at home or would usually even try to make at home. People will bake bread or make cakes, but dairy has this mystery. Traditionally people would have made cheese in their farmhouse, but today everyone's so removed from that. What we do is give them the opportunity to come and see the magic in action and to reconnect with cheese. Watching the milk go to curd, that transition, it's so satisfying. People are genuinely interested in learning more."



Claire began her classes three years ago, around the time energy prices had nearly doubled, and milk prices crept up. "I was looking for another revenue stream which wouldn't add extra cost to the business. We had space and time, and it's something I'd thought about in the past, but this was mostly driven by a need to look at how else we could make the business work.

"We moved to Bidley Dairy in 2023. It's got a lovely cafe and a car park and toilet facilities. Being here meant we offered more of a destination. People can spend time with us, then go for a walk, have a coffee or an ice cream and visit the cows. It works really well."

The Burt's Cheese experience begins in the onsite cafe before leading small groups of no more than six to the workshop. "I try to get as much as possible into two-and-a-half hours," says Claire. "We rennet a vat I've pre-started with starter culture so people can see the transformation. An hour later the curds are ready to cut – and that's the best bit for most people.

"Then we do a clean break test, cut the curds and mould them, and I look after them, draining, salting, piercing and maturing so they're ready to collect three weeks later – though we can send them out if people cover the post and packaging."



In the session attendees also drain a lactic curd to take home at the end of the day, and to churn butter, seasoning pats with flavoured salts (again to take home). "We do a tasting of our cheese as well. It's quite a lot," Claire says

Feedback has been "fantastic" she adds, explaining that visitors enjoy the format and are always surprised by the bang they get for their buck.

HIGH WEALD DAIRY, SUSSEX

EXPERIENCE: TOURS AND TASTINGS

Head of cheese experiences is quite a title – and it's one Steve Saunders of High Weald Dairy takes seriously. He says he loves taking visitors on tours, helping them to discover new things about the wonderous world of cheese, and seeing their faces light up when they tuck into samples.

Like others, cheese experiences were brought into the business just after Covid. "We were looking at how we could open our doors to people more. People, even after Brexit, wanted to know where their food is from, and I came up with the idea of a tour of the factory. There's not many cheese factory's open to the British public – it's not the easiest thing to do – but I came up with a plan, the idea being it is a cross between knowledge, history and a lot of entertainment. I didn't realise how popular it was going to be!"

Steve (who handily is also a toastmaster, which helps in his delivery of the tours) says he thrives off the buzz of public visits, which are often fully booked many weeks in advance.

On arrival there's a briefing and lots of audience participation. "I love the interaction," Steve smiles. "It's not scripted or written down, the tour is all down to the group on the day and prompted by myself. I take them around the factory, showing them cheesemaking from our point of view – and how you can make something so incredible with just four ingredients, tasting throughout. We then go to the maturing room where they can see over 4,000 wheels being matured, learning about our signature cheese, Brighton Blue and taking a few selfies, before we head upstairs for a full tutored tasting around a big table, working through the cheeses we have, maybe relating them to recipes they can use them in or what would go with them on a





cheeseboard."

It's never been so important for cheesemakers to engage with the public, Steve says. "It's a huge passion of mine. Storytelling is such a big part of the British cheese industry and the cheese industry as a whole. Being able to meet the makers means it's more tangible for people. They can see the processes and really understand what goes into cheesemaking, as well as what we're up against with the pressures of farming and the hurdles we have to go through."

Often those on the tours have been gifted vouchers as 'the person who has everything' and Steve thinks that a very positive thing. "They don't necessarily know our cheeses, but then they end up being a customer of ours as well."

Consumers, he agrees with others, are seeking out unique experiences, which is why cheese is flying in the agritourism world. "Whilst you can go to breweries and vineyards and different distilleries, cheese factory tours are still quite unique – there's only a handful in the UK. One of the difficulties I thought we'd come up against was asking people to put on PPE – the hats and shoes – but that ends up being one of their highlights!"

Producers are very good at 'hiding in the background' he adds, "but by opening our doors we can share so much with customers and that can only be a good thing. A lot of people have come back to do ours two to three times."

WENSLEYDALE CREAMERY, YORKSHIRE

EXPERIENCE: TOURS, DEMONSTRATIONS, RESTAURANT

Probably one of the best-known cheese-based activities in the UK, the Yorkshire Wensleydale Cheese Experience has become a vital part of the county's agritourism scene.

There are options available for all ages at the Visitor Centre, from live demonstrations, to pairings in the Taste of Yorkshire tasting room, and cheese-based dishes (including a popular Cheesy Afternoon Tea) in the onsite Calvert's Restaurant or 1897 Coffee Shop.

"We're continually looking at ways in which we can expand and evolve our cheese experience for guests," says Wensleydale Creamery's senior brand manager, Sandra Bell. "The introduction of our Taste of Yorkshire tasting room has given our visitors more opportunities to sample the cheese and learn about different accompaniments.

"With our links to Wallace & Gromit, and the launch of the recent film, this is also an area we have expanded on. The creamery is now home to giant, life-sized knitted figures of Yorkshire Wensleydale's most famous fans, alongside Norbot – the creamery's newest odd-jobbing robot companion."

These new additions are proving popular with families, who are also enjoying the addition of a Find Feathers Trail Quiz, spotting the iconic character from the films hidden throughout the experience to uncover a secret word.

Sandra says advance bookings for the creamery have increased, and a more varied demographic is being attracted.

Continually looking at their offering means the team can ensure they're giving visitors the best experience possible, she adds, saying the visitor centre is a valuable part of the business. "We attract visitors from across the UK and beyond to the Yorkshire Dales and surrounding areas. People love the opportunity to see first-hand the time-honoured traditions of Yorkshire Wensleydale and learn all about our history and process."

THE CHEESE BAR VARIOUS LOCATIONS

EXPERIENCE: CHEESE RESTAURANTS

Mathew Carver is obsessed with cheese – in fact, his entire business revolves around it. Starting as a food truck selling grilled cheese sandwiches eight years ago, he's gone on to create a fromage-based empire, including two Pick and Cheese destinations in London, a further





recently opened in Berlin, The Cheese Barge (on a boat in Paddington) and Rind, attached to The Courtyard Dairy in Yorkshire.

Cheese-based dining experiences are seriously hot business right now, he thinks. "A lot of people love cheese," Mathew says. "I think we've found a bit of a niche because not a lot of people are doing a cheese-focused concept, and our restaurants aren't all carbon copies of each other."

The main premise of each destination is to showcase largely British cheeses alongside pairings that make them sing, allowing diners to pick and choose (cheese) their way through interesting small plates – including Mathew's favourites of butternut spaetzle with English Pecorino, sage butter and pine nuts, and St Ella goats' cheese with Turkish delight – which he says is a delicious surprise for everyone who tries it.

Customers are, he adds, almost creating cheese pilgrimages around the restaurants, marrying their visit with perhaps a trip to local cheesemongers and delis. Customers are, he adds, becoming more adventurous around what they're willing to try, including stronger cheeses, and whackier pairings.

"And we're seeing people becoming more educated about artisanal British cheeses, they're interested in where the cheese is made on the menu, and we have more and more people telling us they've tried a maker's cheese before, or know the dairy. It's an exciting thing."

Adding Rind to The Courtyard Dairy site has proven an especially shrewd move, as consumers spend hours there buying cheese, visiting the cheese museum, and teasing their taste buds with anything from pizza to British Burrata with macerated Yorkshire rhubarb, preserved lemon, pangrattato and radicchio.

Could it be time to add a cheese restaurant to your business?





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HOW TO SERVE AND SELL COOKING CHEESES

Melting and cooking cheeses have gained appeal outside of the cooler months of the year. *Speciality Food* finds out more

There's something sumptuous and incredibly indulgent about melted cheese. The gooey pull of a piece of bread dunked into a boozy fondue. Or the bubbling, burnished surface of Raclette, spooned generously onto a waiting plate of potatoes and cornichons.

'Hot cheese' is certainly having a revival at the moment, with multiple retailers telling *Speciality Food* they're experiencing strong sales in products like Le Gruyere, Comte, Raclette and Fontina year-round, not just when there's a chill in the air.

Flashed under the grill, or tumbled into a pan over a low heat, melting style cheeses (which tend to hail from the Alpine regions) are, cheesemongers say, becoming easy-to-cook centrepieces for their customers' dinner parties. These cheeses also, they add, bring with them a sense of nostalgia. A grown-up version of that slice of cheese on toast they might have eaten as a snack after school.

"Shoppers are looking beyond familiar blocks and Cheddars," says Amanda Burningham, head of cheese marketing at Emmi UK. "They're seeking out cheeses with provenance, character and culinary flair. The UK's continental cheese market has reached an all-time high of nearly £1 billion as consumers become more adventurous and open to exploring European traditions like Alpine cheesemaking."

Jen Grimstone-Jones, founder of The Pangbourne Cheese Shop in Berkshire, says lots of her customers ask for melting cheeses. "Raclette is a great seller for us all year round!"

Melting cheese "evokes childhood memories for many people," she adds. "And Raclette and fondue are seen as a more sophisticated dining option. They are also fantastic dishes to share with friends, and we are seeing a huge rise in people across all ages and backgrounds staying at home to socialise."

Marcello Basini, director of Jumi Cheese, thinks it's taste and versatility that attract customers to cooking cheeses. "They're convenient and easy to use as well. You don't really need any special tools, and you can get so much flavour from melting cheese. We specialise in Raclette. It's something customers can prepare at the table without having to worry too much about cooking and preparation beforehand."

DISPLAYING COOKING CHEESES

Go big with your displays if you can, says Marcello. "Wherever possible, it's very beautiful to have the wheels out at the front of the shop." That doesn't mean whole wheels if space is restrictive, but even a half or quarter of Gruyere or Comte taking pride of place can create excitement for customers, who've perhaps only ever seen these varieties sliced into 200g portions and wrapped in plastic in supermarkets.

Amanda recommends displaying additional signage around these cheeses, letting customers know where they're from and the myriad ways they can be used. Print off fondue recipe cards, for example, and perch them nearby. Don't miss out on the opportunity to cross-sell too, positioning crusty bread, charcuterie and pickles close to classic melting and cooking cheeses.

If time and space allow, demonstrate the beauty of cooking cheeses. Have a bubbling pot of fondue ready for the lunchtime rush, or get a Raclette on the go.

A QUESTION OF TASTE

While many Alpine cheeses already form part of customers' baskets (such as Gruyere) others like Raclette and Taleggio can prove a harder sell unless shoppers have specifically visited your shop to buy them.

How, then, do you entice would-be Raclette lovers to give the cheese a go? There's no real way, Marcello says, to sample Raclette as a cooking cheese at the counter as its texture and flavours are radically different when it's cold.

It's down to the cheesemonger to either, as above, offer nibbles made with melted cheese to show off their clout, or to spend time with new customers talking to them about the origins of these cheeses, how to use them, and all the beautiful nuances they can expect to come through when they introduce a bit of heat.

WHAT TO STOCK

As we've already mentioned, Gruyere, Comte, Emmental, Fontina and Taleggio are all must-stocks for retailers wanting to tap into the 'moment' cooked cheese is having.

Jen says she also stocks Reblochon PDO all year, as it's proving popular with customers, and she points them too, towards British Alpine styles like Lincolnshire Poacher. "And Tunworth can make a fondue ultra creamy!"

With interest in Raclette now soaring, now could also be the time to introduce customers to more than the plain, natural version, which is just the tip of the iceberg in this category. "For us, truffle Raclette sells well and is absolutely smashing," says Marcello. "We have actual truffle pieces in it, not just oil or flavourings and chilli or smoked Raclette are also very very popular."

IS IT WORTH SELLING/HIRING SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT?

If shelf and storage space allow, it is worth investing in Raclette machines and fondue sets to hire or sell, Marcello and Jen agree. "We have a Raclette machine that holds a quarter of a Raclette that we lend out to customers without charge as long as they buy the cheese from us," Jen reveals. "It is really popular for parties. We also offer to slice Raclette into thin strips if people have the tabletop grills at home, and we find our French customers often want some Morbier PDO sliced up as well."

Jumi sells and hires out Raclette sets. "I think it works really well," says Marcello. "We get a lot of traction with hiring them. We simply charge a deposit and when people bring it back we return the deposit."

More customers are seeking out this option, having tried Raclette at festivals and food markets. "A few years ago, not many people knew Raclette," Marcello continues. "It was a novelty. But now people can't wait to use the machines at home."

IN STORE TEMPTATIONS

If you curate cheese events or have a wine bar/cafe area within your shop, it's well worth hosting a Raclette or fondue night as a way to introduce more customers to Alpine cooking cheeses – especially if they're a bit shy about sampling them cold at the counter.

Jumi's Newington Green store hosts a Raclette event every Friday from October to May, frequently selling out tables, says Marcello. "It's a sociable thing to do, and we see lots of friends and couples coming in. They have a machine in the middle of the table, we can talk them through the different types of Raclette – we usually have six flavours available. We find lots of people come to try that and then want to replicate it at home because it's so simple."

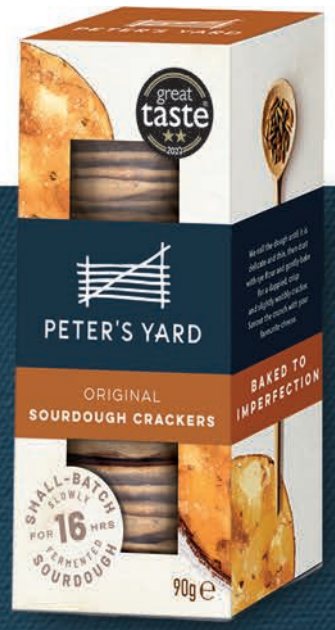
> "Cooking cheeses are convenient and easy to use. You don't really need any special tools, and you can get so much flavour from them"



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"Bobolink Dairy – natural cheesemaking"



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

Recently, I visited Bobolink Dairy & Bakehouse in New Jersey to immerse myself in the world of artisanal cheesemaking, where every step is guided by a deep respect for nature. My first journey into American cheese began at The Cheese Mongers Invitational in 2023, where I was introduced to exceptional cheeses and discovered the vibrant energy of the competition.

It was through Brett Sacks of Slow Grown Farm, inspired by his own time at Bobolink, that I learned about this unique dairy. Notably, Bronwen Percival from Neal's Yard Dairy had also started her farmstead journey here. Eager to see the farm firsthand, I contacted Jonathan and Nina White and arranged a visit. After a long drive through New York, I arrived at their historic 1833 farmhouse late at night. The kitchen, the heart of their home, welcomed me with outstanding cheese and beer. The Baudolino Tomme, in particular, left a lasting impression with its earthy, creamy taste.

The next morning, I awoke to the sight of bobolinks in the fields, a testament to the farm's chemical free methods that support biodiversity. Jonathan and Nina have become well known advocates for sustainable agriculture, even appearing on "No Reservations" with Anthony Bourdain. Their approach, rooted in care for the land, demonstrates that farming in harmony with nature enriches both people and planet.

To truly understand what sets Bobolink Dairy apart, it's essential to explore their commitment to regenerative, traditional agricultural practices. The Whites prioritise animal welfare; their pasture raised cows graze freely on nutrient rich grasses and are never given growth hormones or unnecessary antibiotics. This practice yields high quality milk that captures the character of the local landscape.

Throughout my stay, I observed the cheesemaking process up close, from dawn milking to carefully stirring the curds. Everything is done by hand, blending precision and intuition. In the aging room, wheels of cheese mature on wooden shelves, each developing its own unique flavour. It is easy to see why aspiring cheesemakers come here to learn; the sense of artistry and respect for the craft is unmistakable.

Conversations with Jonathan and Nina revealed their philosophy of working with natural cycles. Rotating pastures not only nourishes the soil but also encourages wildlife, like bobolinks and native pollinators, to thrive alongside dairy production. This interconnectedness is visible across the farm, where healthy flora and fauna flourish in tandem with daily routines.

Meals at Bobolink Dairy were simple and memorable: slices of crusty bread with rich raw milk butter, wedges of aged cheese, and locally brewed beer. Evenings were spent discussing the joys and challenges of artisan cheesemaking and the community built around real food produced with integrity.

What struck me most was the Whites' genuine hospitality and passion. Visitors are welcomed not just as customers, but as fellow explorers eager to reconnect with traditional foods and sustainable practices. Their story, and the cheeses they craft, show that small farms can thrive by placing stewardship and sustainability at the core of their mission.

Leaving Bobolink Dairy & Bakehouse, I felt inspired by the care and dedication that define every aspect of their work. Their example proves that mindful farming and cheesemaking can nourish people and the land. I look forward to returning, sharing more stories and flavours from this special place, and encouraging others to seek out experiences that celebrate our vital connection with nature.

Get behind Neal's Yard Dairy territorials campaign

Cheesemongers, food producers and chefs in the UK are being urged to back a campaign launched by Neal's Yard Dairy. A champion of British artisan cheeses for nearly five decades, the retailer started its Eat Them or Lose Them initiative to highlight the importance of the nation's heritage territorial cheeses, while bolstering support for the farmers who make them.

"Our classic British territorial cheeses continue to face decline," said a spokesperson from Neal's Yard Dairy. "Despite their deep roots in British farming , and methods honed over centuries, only a handful of small-scale makers remain – their work increasingly overshadowed by the growing popularity of continental styles."

Neal's Yard is working with chefs across the UK, who are actively using and talking about these cheeses. "And we've collaborated with The Kernal Brewery to brew a porter ideal to pair with British territorials, as well as industry events to bring together some members of the food community to brainstorm ideas around increasing sales and awareness of these cheeses."

The retailer says these kinds of cheeses are at their best served at room temperature, and they find customers fall in love with them at the counter when sampling. Why not up your own territorials game this season with special tasting events, promotions and pairings?



Special anniversary for historic cheese

As we approach the 250th anniversary of prolific English author, Jane Austen, there's time to reflect on a historic cheese she seemed to take a shine to – Wiltshire Loaf.

In her dramedy, Emma, Austen describes Mr Elton as being delighted to have been offered the cheese at a fancy party.

With her birthday falling this December, and celebrations to mark the author's enduring appeal throughout the winter, now's a good time to order in and promote Wiltshire Loaf – revived by Ceri Cryer at Brinkworth Dairy 20 years ago.

"This traditional British cheese, once a stable of farmhouse tables and market stalls in the 18th and 19th centuries, had vanished from production by the mid-20th Century," said Ceri's mother, Ro Collingborn, of the cheesemaking Collingborn family. "With its mellow, buttery flavour and unique double-pressing method, the Wiltshire Loaf is a nod to a time when cheese was made with instinct, patience and a deep connection to land and livestock."

The semi-hard cow's milk cheese was originally pressed into a shallow, loaf-like shape, made on Wiltshire farms using local dairy, typically during the spring and summer flush.

Brinkworth Dairy's version stays true to the traditional method, while elevating quality through high-welfare, closed-herd milk, and small-batch artisan craftsmanship.

"We wanted to create a cheese that truly tells the story of this place," said Ceri. "The Wiltshire Loaf is humble, honest and quietly beautiful. It reflects the land, the seasons, and the slow magic of milk turning to cheese."

Each batch is clothbound and aged for eight to 12 weeks, resulting in a firm rind, pale interior, and flavour that deepens with each bite. "It melts like a dream," Ro said, adding, "In an era when consumers are increasingly seeking authenticity, provenance and sustainability, the Wiltshire Loaf hits all the right notes. It's part of a broader movement to revive regional cheeses that once thrived in local food cultures before industrialisation pushed them aside. As more chefs and mongers discover its quiet charm, the Wiltshire Loaf is poised not just for a comeback, but a rightful place among Britain's most-treasured traditional cheeses."

Last chance to enter Young Cheesemonger of the Year

Entries are still open for the Academy of Cheese's Young Cheesemonger of the Year competition.

Young mongers from across the global cheese industry can apply until 21st September, with the final taking place at the World Cheese Awards in Bern, Switzerland on Thursday 13th November.

Contestants will participate in five rounds of judging at Festhall in Bern, with challenges including cheeseboard preparation, weighing and wrapping, cheese identification, pairing with Peter's Yard crackers, and finally, the MasterRind quiz. The overall winner will take home the coveted Young Cheesemonger of the Year trophy, a Boska Pro Cheese Tools Kit, a place on the Academy of Cheese Level Two certification course, and an invitation to judge at the World Cheese Awards 2026.

Tracey Colley, founding director of the Academy of Cheese, said, "Across the world, the skilled profession of cheesemonger is gaining recognition as an exciting career option for young people. With the support of our main sponsors, Peter's Yard, we're here to celebrate that, and add momentum to this movement."

British public invited to vote for best new cheese

The Real Cheese Project, spearheaded by James Grant of No.2 Pound Street and Sam and Amy Brice of Freshly Ground PR, has revealed the finalists for People's Cheese 2025.

For the past two years, The Real Cheese Project has held live online cheese tastings in the autumn, with the public encouraged to vote for their favourite.

Territorials and Cheddars have already taken the spotlight, but 2025 is the turn of Britain's newest cheeses.

Sponsored by Chiswick Cheese Market, hundreds of people took part in round one of the competition at the market in June, tasting 20 newly launched cheeses from across the UK, landing on four finalists to be judged by the public on 24th September.

In the mix are Crottin-style raw lactic goats' milk cheese, Yr Afr, made at Wacky Wedge in Bethesda, North Wales, soft lactic added-cream cow's milk cheese, Ooh La La, made at Highland Fine Cheeses, a goats' milk version of Cornish Brie, Nanny Gywnn, made by the Cornish Cheese Company, and hard, washed rind raw milk goats' cheese, Redlap, from Stone Tree Dairy.

The live final will be hosted by comedian and cheese fan, Marcus Brigstocke. People's Cheese boxes are available to order now, with 5% of profits going into a 'real cheese support fund', donated to initiatives seeking to protect, develop and progress real cheese in the UK.

New retail perspectives from industry experts



Fox trio out in time for Christmas

Ideal for hampers and gifting, Belton Farm has just brought to market a new trio pack bringing its award-winning cheeses together into one collection.

Each pack contains a 100g portion of Silver Fox (a modern British Superior Vintage Cheddar, slowly aged for 18 months for a distinctly savoury flavour with hints of caramel), Red Fox (aged for 16 months bringing a subtle sweetness and unexpected crunch), and Smoked Fox (signature Red Fox, gently smoked over oak for a savoury tang).

"Our Fox range has developed a strong following over the years," said Belton Farm managing director, Justin Beckett. "By bringing these three standout cheeses together in one pack, we're offering cheese lovers the perfect way to sample the unique personalities of each variety."

The trio pack is available now.



Cornish Cheese Company announces new soft cheese

The Cornish Cheese Company has recently unveiled its newest cheese – Dozmary. Developed as an evolution of the maker's beloved Cornish Camembert, Dozmary was created with a single goal – to produce the highest quality soft cheese, bursting with full flavour and character.

It's named after the legendary Dozmary Pool on Bodmin Moor, not far from the farm, and said to be the resting place of King Arthur's sword, Excalibur.

The cheese is made with locally sourced milk and matured to develop complexity, bringing pronounced vegetal notes on the nose and palate, and an oozy texture. And it's already and award-winner, having been quietly entered into the International Cheese and Dairy Awards, taking the crown of Supreme Champion in the speciality cheese class.

"We thought we had something special with Dozmary, but to be recognised on such a global stage so early on was a real honour," said Ben Stansfield, head of sales and marketing at the Cornish Cheese Company. "This cheese represents years of hard work, experimentation, and a deep respect for our local ingredients and landscape."

Dozmary is available now to all speciality retailers and cheesemongers in the UK, presented in 250g custom-designed wooden boxes.

Paxton & Whitfield reveals exclusive Christmas cheeses

The team at Paxton & Whitfield have been working hard behind the scenes to bring a range of exclusive additions to market for Christmas 2025.

New this year is St Ella, made by the Moody family in the New Forest, and named for the cheesemaker's mother, Stella. St Ella is a hand-crafted Crottin-style goats' cheese, available in a small, accessible format. Delicate with bright citrus, earthy, nutty tones, it has a fudgy core and natural ivory geotrichum rind.

Another goats' milk cheese, Aldwych, commemorates the cheese retailer's beginnings in the 1740s, when founder Stephen Cullum would sell Stilton from the top of a barrel at Aldwych Market. This cheese is made in collaboration with a maker in the North of England, and bursts with creamy lemon, clean notes and a soft texture.

Ewe's milk cheese, Cullum, has returned for 2025. Crafted in collaboration with Raven Tree Cheese at Holker Farm in the Lake District, it's only made during the summer, and is delivered to Paxton's after two weeks, matured by the team, being brushed and turned twice a week for a supple, buttery finish and balanced savoury depth.

And aromatic, washed rind cheese, St Pirans, has been made with Whalesborough Cheese in Cornwall, matured at Paxton's with brine washing, which helps the cheese develop an orange rind and sticky, umami taste.

Other Christmas highlights include an XO Red Leicester, maturing Sparkenhoe on to 12 months, and a Baby Yorkshire Blue from Shepherds Purse.







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SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR 2025



Speciality & Fine Food Fair returns to Olympia London on 9th-10th September 2025, bringing together the UK's most exciting showcase of high-quality food and drink

A must-attend date in the calendar for independent retailers, chefs, hoteliers, wholesalers and distributors, the Fair is a vibrant hub of product discovery, meaningful connection and expert insight into the trends shaping fine food and drink.

This year, visitors will find an expanded line-up of features that reflect the ever-evolving landscape of artisanal and speciality produce.

New for 2025 is the IND!E Pavilion, a dedicated space spotlighting innovative challenger brands handpicked for their quality, originality and potential to disrupt the mainstream. Also new is an expanded Start-Up Village, offering more early-stage businesses the chance to showcase their unique products to an audience of decision-makers, buyers and trendsetters.

The Fair's popular features return for another year, including the Food for Thought stage, home to practical sessions on everything from pricing strategy and product development to sustainability and market trends. The Drinks Quarter and Great Taste Deli offer curated zones for sampling the latest in craft drinks and award-winning produce, while the Village Square provides a relaxed networking environment for visitors and exhibitors alike.

Another highlight for 2025 is Pitch Live, in partnership with IND!E, where start-ups and scale-ups present their products live to a panel of industry buyers and experts. The Speciality & Fine Food Fair Awards also return, celebrating excellence across a range of categories with new additions for 2025.

Nicola Woods, event manager, Speciality & Fine Food Fair, said, "Speciality & Fine Food Fair is where the fine food community comes together to explore what's next, connect with passionate producers, and uncover products that excite and inspire. For 2025, we've expanded the event to reflect the energy and evolution of the sector, with new features, new networking opportunities and loads of fantastic new brands and we can't wait to welcome the speciality food and drink community this September.

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"We're excited to be launching a new networking event at the show in partnership with Invest NI, which will feature a range of delicious Northern Irish products and some key industry insights from the British Independent Retailers Association and the Farm Retail Association.

"We will be introducing visitors to our Behind the Counter Club, a brand-new networking opportunity, and launching a brand-new app for this year's Fair enabling buyers to connect directly with producers and navigate the event with more ease. Plus, new for this year's event we'll be celebrating and highlighting quality regional producers from around the UK."

Bryony Taylor-Edwards, head of marketing and buying manager at Yarnton Home & Garden, said of the 2024 edition, "My first visit to Speciality & Fine Food Fair and it was absolutely brilliant. I discovered some fantastic new brands, I enjoyed the buzzy atmosphere and its handy location, and I placed lots of orders which we are excited to receive."

With a rich mix of established producers, emerging talent and thought-provoking content, Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2025 is the destination to discover what's next in fine food and drink, connect with the sector's key players and stay ahead of the curve.



THE START-UP VILLAGE

Each year the Start-Up Village at Speciality & Fine Food Fair is a must-attend for retailers, wholesalers and hospitality professionals looking to explore new products and emerging brands and this year's event is no exception.

For 2025 the Start-Up Village has expanded significantly, welcoming more than 60 start-up brands from cold-brewed sparkling tea to Scandanavian baked goods to traditional Palestinian chilli paste.

Visitors to this year's event can meet with brands such as 1386 Patisserie, a design-led luxury patisserie specialising in macarons and inspired by the architectural grandeur of the Milanese Duomo and the elegance of the 1920s.

Honest Umami is on a mission to reframe the conversation around MSG. Often misunderstood, MSG is at the heart of this start-up's flavour-forward range, which includes Pure MSG, 3-2-1 All-Purpose seasoning, Salt & Pepper, and Chilli blends, all crafted to showcase the ingredient's culinary potential.

Bringing a fresh perspective to the humble pickle, Pickle Project is challenging the status quo with a focus on flavour, science, and simplicity. Using only fresh, natural ingredients and an innovative ultrasound method to infuse their brine, the team has created pickles with clean, complex flavour and crystal-clear brine – no floating herbs or seeds in sight.



INTERNATIONAL INNOVATION

In addition to showcasing the Best of British, Speciality & Fine Food Fair welcomes quality products from around the world and this year's event is no exception. From Belgium and Bahrain to Spain, South Korea and the United States, international innovation is firmly on show.

Visitors can also discover CHERICO, a bold new take on hot drinks made with French chicory rather than coffee. Their range is designed for those seeking a low-caffeine alternative, combining natural ingredients with a rich, satisfying flavour profile.

From Korea, Garimi Co Ltd is a specialist sushi nori manufacturer exporting to over 35 countries and managing the entire production process in-house, from raw seaweed selection and washing to processing and shipment.

For lovers of tropical fruits, Thailand's Nanafruits Company Limited offers a wide range of snacks and garnishes including dehydrated mango, banana, pineapple, longan, dragon fruit, and strawberries, available in both retail packaging and bulk options.

Bon Bahrain is the creation of two female Bahraini entrepreneurs on a mission to make exquisite artisanal handmade chocolates in Bahrain. Made with the highest quality ingredients, their chocolates are designed to be a treat for the eyes and the palate. The chocolate bonbons are hand-painted with love and made in small batches to ensure freshness.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Food for Thought stage at this year's event will be packed with insightful sessions over the course of the two days, from trends insights by thefoodpeople's Charles Banks and Egg Soldiers' Kateline Porritt to panel discussions with leading mainstream and independent retailers.

The topics covered as part of the programme will include cyber resilience, with Paul Hargreaves of Cotswold Fayre discussing the wholesaler's recent cyber-attack, a session on the women shaping the drinks industry, ethical sustainability and a discussion on the power of product knowledge and the value of staff training, hosted by Guild of Fine Food's John Farrand and featuring speakers Mark Kacary of The Norfolk Deli and Stefano Cuomo of Macknade.

Mark comments, "In the rush to drive shareholder value, it's easy to forget that this is a people business. Building close, genuine relationships with suppliers turns you and your team into true advocates for the products you sell.

"When it comes to customers, it's about more than just transactions, it's about understanding their needs and creating meaningful, personal experiences that make them feel valued and understood. I'm looking forward to diving into this conversation and sharing insights on how we can bring that all-important human touch back to the heart of food retail."

Day one of the Fair will also feature a candid conversation with Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones MBE and Alex Emmanuel-Jones, the father and son team behind The Black Farmer, who will discuss the recent expansion of the retail brand and selecting products that align with their values.

Alex comments, "Right now, people want more than just a good product – they want to know what a brand stands for. I built this brand by trusting my gut and staying true to what I believe in. This session is about sharing the real, behind-the-scenes stuff: the risks, the wins, and how having a mission can guide you through it all when the market gets tough."

Niamh McCormack, commercial trends and acceleration lead at Holland & Barrett, will join the discussion 'Healthier by design: Turning wellness expectations into retail opportunity', and says, "I'm thrilled to represent H&B at this year's Speciality & Fine Food Fair. Over the past few years, we've begun reimagining our food and beverage range to build a market-leading wellness proposition. It's a real privilege to share our journey and insights as part of this year's panel discussion.

"More than ever before, consumers are taking ownership of their wellbeing, and proactively seeking simple, everyday ways to support their health. A shift towards non-UPF products is central to this movement, and it's not a passing trend. To stay ahead, both brands and retailers must explore how we make non-UPF choices more accessible, better understood, and truly relevant to how people live and eat today."

Danni Horsley, senior brand builder at Elephants Can't Jump, will be presenting a session titled '10 ways to use provenance to supercharge your brand & story' alongside the company's MD Bob Bayman, and comments, "Provenance has always mattered - but in 2025, it's more important than ever.

"As consumers demand more transparency, local produce and retailers seek stronger storytelling, understanding how to use provenance as a strategic brand tool can unlock real commercial advantage. Our session is all about showing brands and retailers how to use it well, and perhaps when to hold back."



NEW PRODUCTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

While the Start-Up Village shines a light on the newest arrivals in fine food and drink, visitors to Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2025 will also discover a wealth of established names bringing fresh energy to the market. From bold reinterpretations of classic flavours to thoughtful updates to everyday staples, the show is a key launchpad for new product development and a vital meeting point for the industry.

Paul Donoughue, owner at Green & Lovely, comments, "Speciality & Fine Food Fair has become a firm date for our diaries, and it is considered essential to the success of our business. It's here we get to scope out exciting new products and the producers behind them, to catch up with existing suppliers to see what they are up to and to see what new plans we can hatch."

This spirit of exploration and collaboration is echoed across the show floor, with exhibitors using the event to introduce thoughtfully developed ranges that speak to current consumer trends.



Ruffingtons, for example, brings the same care and attention to canine treats that might be expected from a high-end human patisserie. Celebrating the emotional bond between pets and their owners, the brand has created a collection of luxurious, hand-decorated dog treats, free from artificial additives and presented in gift-ready packaging.

Terra Rossa, long known for its award-winning Arabian delicacies, is launching Zaatar Passata: a UK-made, ready-to-eat sauce featuring tomatoes, garlic, onions, and the bold flavours of Palestinian zaatar. Preserved in the brand's own Jordanian extra virgin olive oil, it's a rich, versatile addition to any kitchen.

Stillgarden Distillery, an independent Dublin producer, has launched four award-winning Irish aperitifs and liqueurs in the UK. Crafted with botanicals from their community garden, the range includes Berrissimo, O'MARO, Glas 55 and Buí 43. Bold, refreshing and versatile, they're perfect for spritzes, cocktails or sipping.

Gralgo From Ceylon, a premium exporter of authentic Ceylon teas and spices, will be introducing the latest addition to its Ceylon tea range, a Mango & Peach Tea, perfect for cocktails and refreshing blends.





FRESH EUROPEAN PRODUCE TO TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR

Explore more than 50 exceptional varieties from across the EU at the UK's leading speciality food event

Vividly coloured, ripe and aromatic – fresh produce remains one of the most exciting ingredients in speciality retail.

From sweet, plump tomatoes still clinging to their herbaceously scented vines, to purple, sun-ripened figs destined to bring a luxurious finish to a dessert, salad or cheese plate, consumers are captivated by fruit and vegetables, especially when they boast a unique heritage or story.

At this year's Speciality & Fine Food Fair (London Olympia, 9th-10th September) as part of its More Than Only Food & Drink campaign, the EU will demonstrate the beauty and huge variety of exceptional fresh produce to be found across the continent, with a focus on organic, PDO (Protected Designation of Origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) and lesser-known varieties.

The bright display at booth 1350 is set to showcase 54 products (two per EU Member States, one fresh, one preserved), alongside pairings, with additional space given to European processed meats, cheeses, bakery and confectionery goods.

Veryan Bliss, fruit and vegetable advisor to the campaign, says fresh produce plays a vital role in enriching the UK market. "From everyday staples to speciality ingredients, EU growers offer produce grown to rigorous environmental and food safety standards, with many items certified organic, or recognised under PDO and PGI schemes.

"These trusted marks ensure authenticity, traceability, and a deep connection to regional farming traditions – bringing British consumers not only great taste, but also a guarantee of provenance and integrity."

On day one of the show, there'll be an 'open kitchen tasting' consisting of an assembly collection of products, and cooking demonstrations which will see advisors and chefs (including Nikki Lewis Logie, Ned Palmer and Mike Knowlden) interacting with visitors.

Demonstrations continue on day two, which also includes a speaking session on the Food for Thought stage at 11am.

Veryan will lead the discussion.

With a career dedicated to improving fresh produce supply chains, her leadership, innovative strategies and commitment to quality and safety continue to set industry standards. As well as being co-chair of the Waitrose Agronomy Group and Waitrose Farming Partnership Group for 20 years, Veryan was commercial technical director of Suncrop Produce from 2003 to 2022, growing the business exponentially.

The theme of her session is EU-UK trade, and sustainability opportunities in fresh fruit and vegetables. The discussion will spotlight the vital role of the European Union in advancing sustainable, high-quality trade in fresh produce with the UK, exploring leadership in food standards, innovation, and new opportunities for collaboration in a post-Brexit landscape.

Bringing these themes to life, attendees will be invited to taste a curated selection of delicious seasonal produce from EU Member States, revealing the scope and diversity of what's available, including many lesser-known ingredients. This will illustrate firsthand how EU food is about more than just flavour – it's about values, trust and a shared future.

"Having worked and travelled across the EU fresh produce industry for over 30 years, I've seen firsthand the passion, precision and pride that go into growing and preparing some of the finest fruits and vegetables in the world," adds Veryan. "The EU continues to deliver outstanding quality to the UK market. I'm delighted to be able to showcase a selection of these exceptional products, each one a reflection of the integrity, sustainability and care behind Europe's diverse farming traditions."











A TASTE OF EUROPE

Amongst the samples to explore at the EU's More Than Only Food & Drink booth this year will be:

STEIRISCHES KÜRBISKERNÖL PGI, AUSTRIA
Toasted organic Styrian PGI pumpkin seeds – a rare variety prized for their rich, nutty flavour and distinctive appearance – are grown specifically for oil production. Cold-pressed and unrefined, the oil retains its full nutritional profile without the use of heat or chemicals. Its deep green hue and velvety texture make it a versatile ingredient, and it's naturally rich in Vitamin E and polyunsaturated fats.

SZENTESI PAPRIKA PGI, HUNGARY
Szentesi paprika PGI celebrated for its colour, sweet aroma and balanced heat. Grown in the country's sun-drenched plains and harvested at peak ripeness, the peppers are carefully dried and ground to produce a vivid spice as flavourful as it is fragrant.

FIGS, ITALY
Grown under the golden sun of Southern Italy, the figs you'll see at the event are a celebration of natural sweetness and rustic elegance. Tender and honeyed, they're harvested at peak ripeness to preserve their lush flavour and soft, velvety texture.

PIRI PIRI PEPPERS, PORTUGAL
Produced in Southern Portugal piri piri peppers are small but fiercely flavoursome, bringing both heat and citrussy brightness to the table. They are a cornerstone of Portuguese culinary tradition, used in oils, marinades, sauces and spice blends.

ORGANIC PEAR JUICE, ROMANIA
Enjoy the sweet, pure, refreshing taste of hand-picked sun-ripened pears, grown on a sustainable farm in the heart of Transylvania. This juice is cold-pressed to preserve the fruit's natural nutrients, while capturing its very essence. No water or preservatives are added.

ORGANIC CHERRIES, NETHERLANDS
Grown and prepared in the Netherlands, these cherries reflect a rare commitment to local sourcing, making this one of the few cherry products in the country made with domestic fruit. Perfect for desserts, yoghurts, pastries or as a tart topping.

Invest Northern Ireland

PANEL DISCUSSION:

NORTHERN IRELAND'S SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Sustainability is at the heart of Northern Ireland's future, and three key players will be talking through their plans at this year's show in partnership with Invest NI

ETHICAL SUSTAINABILITY: CREATING A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE OF VALUES & GROWTH

TAKES PLACE 1:30-2:15PM 9TH SEPTEMBER, FOOD FOR THOUGHT STAGE

When businesses work towards a better future through supporting both people and the environment, the efforts they make today – even seemingly small tweaks to operations – can have a lasting impact for years to come. Invest NI have brought three businesses together at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2025 for an insightful discussion around creating meaningful change.

MICHELLE CHARRINGTON
INVEST NI



The Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 mandates reaching net zero emissions by 2050, with an interim target of at least 48% emission reductions by 2030. As a result, Northern Ireland stands at a pivotal point. But cutting emissions locally isn't enough, what really matters is the global impact, which means industries and governments need to work together. Right now, 43.5% of Northern Ireland's electricity comes from renewable sources. However, overall carbon reductions here are still behind the UK average. Since 1990, there has been a reduction in emissions in Northern Ireland of 31.5%, compared to nearly 53% across the UK.

Food and drink businesses are feeling the pressure to become more sustainable. This is being driven by new regulations, changing customer expectations, and financial requirements from banks and investors. Invest NI is helping businesses across the region act.

Invest NI offers support at every stage, from expert advice and tailored sustainability plans to funding for energy-saving equipment. Their trade and investment teams also help local companies grow by connecting them with international partners, opening new markets, and supporting the shift toward greener products and services. By aligning sustainability with business growth, Invest NI is supporting Northern Ireland's food and drink sector in preparing for a low-carbon future, while unlocking opportunities arising from the race to net zero.

BRONAGH CLARKE
MARKETING AND INNOVATIONS DIRECTOR, FOREST FEAST



As a business we believe in doing business better – with our products, for our people, the community and the environment. We manage our impact on the planet by improving the way we do business and operating as efficiently as possible.

We only work with farmers, growers and suppliers who share our obsession for delivering the best, and who are committed to ensuring sustainable environmental practices and targeting a zero waste approach.

Our partnerships with smallholder farms and organisations also ensure fair prices, local education and empowerment of indigenous farmers through the sales of dried fruit and nuts. Forest Feast has partnered with the PREDA Fairtrade organisation for 15 years, which works for social and economic justice for the poor and oppressed in the Philippines.

In 2024 we moved all our Forest Feast chocolate Cacao-Trace certified chocolate. Cacao-Trace is a higher level sustainable cocoa sourcing programme that focuses on better chocolate that creates value for all, from farmer to consumer. The farmers get paid a quality premium on top of the farm-gate price and receive a bonus; the equivalent of an extra 2-4 months salary. Money is also given back to the community in the form of new schools, hospitals or environmental projects.

As a business we aim to offset some of our carbon footprint by planting trees and recovering forests. We have partnered with Ecologi, which fights climate change through reforestation projects by planting trees and restoring the environment to build a more sustainable future. To date we have planted over 10,000 trees. In 2025 we moved to 100% locally sourced renewable energy. We are currently installing solar panels onsite which will be fully operational early 2026.

We are sponsors to some of NIs finest emerging athletes, and have been the lead sponsor to Swim Ulster's Aquasprint Junior League for over 12 years. Giving back has always been close to our hearts. We have a longstanding relationship with Marie Curie, Action Cancer, NI Cancer Fund for Children and The Simon Community.

Finally, we have started our B Corp journey, and hope to be certified by the end of 2026.

> "As a business we believe in doing business better – with our products, for our people, the community and the environment. We manage our impact on the planet by improving the way we do business and operating as efficiently as possible"

JONATHAN MCWHINNEY
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, THOMPSON'S TEA



As a proud member of the Ethical Tea Partnership, Thompson's Tea is dedicated to maintaining ethical and sustainable practices throughout its operations. Originally founded in 1896, the business is still family run and as dedicated as ever to the practice of bringing excellent quality tea that benefits both people and planet.

The team continue to source from gardens that are run to the highest ethical standards; including protecting workers' rights – and are committed to supporting future welfare initiatives such as improving access to clean water, and providing biofuel cooking stoves and household solar electricity for tea garden workers.

Thompson's environmental initiatives are comprehensive and ongoing; from switching to biodegradable paper to reduce plastic usage in their packaging, to minimising energy and water usage and ensuring that no waste goes to landfill, the team is passionate about lowering the impact of their operations on the environment.

Plus, they are taking significant steps to reduce their carbon footprint, including utilising a green energy supply which has reduced Scope 2 emissions to zero with future ambitions to invest in renewable energy solutions such as solar PV arrays and wind turbines to offset emissions.

By regularly monitoring the impact of these efforts and continuing to collaborate with eco-minded partners, Thompson's is working tirelessly to benefit both the people who work for the business and the environment it operates within.

> "The Thompson's team is committed to sourcing from gardens that are run to the highest ethical standards; including protecting workers' rights and minimising environmental impact"

PATRICK BLACK
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, CLANDEBOYE ESTATE YOGHURT



Clandeboye Estate Yoghurt was founded in 2008 by Lady Dufferin, or Lindy Guinness – a passionate conservationist – as a farm diversification project.

A commitment to sustainable business practice is a key part of Lady Dufferin's legacy and we strive to ensure our farm and creamery sustain and secure the future of the Estate and its bio-diversity.

The company's creamery commissioned in 2022 is powered exclusively by renewable energy generated by an anaerobic digestor which is fed on a diet of sileage, forage crops and whey which is the byproduct of Clandeboye's authentic straining process used to create their Greek Style Yoghurt.

Surplus energy generated is sold back to the local grid with the total annual output from the digestor equating to the average electricity consumption used to power 600 homes in NI*. The hot water generated by the digestor is used both for heating, processing and cleaning on site. Per annum the company has reduced its carbon emissions by 38 tonnes of CO2 through the use of renewable energy vs fossil fuels.

Between 2022-2023 the business undertook a plastic reduction initiative, removing 4.5 tonnes of plastic per annum in year one by reducing the plastic used to present their products and by investing in more efficient equipment to wrap pallets prior to despatch. In year two the company removed a further 2.5 tonnes of plastic per annum by taking the single use plastic lids off their products.

All product packaging is fully recyclable and as the next step in their ongoing sustainability journey the company are currently moving their brand into new pots containing 70% recycled content.

> "A commitment to sustainable business practice is a key part of Lady Dufferin's legacy and we strive to ensure our farm and creamery sustain and secure the future of the Estate and its bio-diversity"



Northern Ireland

Meet us in the **Village Square**

Grab a seat and join the chat with some of Northern Ireland's newest food and drink brands.

We can't wait for you to taste our award-winning sweet treats, sumptuous sauces and maybe a cocktail or two...

London Speciality & Fine Food Fair
Tuesday 9 September – 12:15
Wednesday 10 September – 11:15

For more information contact
Michelle Charrington
E: michelle.charrington@investni.com
Alex Taggart
E: alex.taggart@investni.com

- BASALT DISTILLERY
- CLANDEBOYE ESTATE YOGHURT
- FOREST FEAST
- S'MORE'A'LICIOUS
- POCO PICANTE
- THOMPSON'S TEA
- CRAWFORD'S ROCK SEAWEED
- LONG MEADOW CIDER
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- MELTING POT FUDGE

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Northern Ireland
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LIVE PITCHES FROM EMERGING BRANDS

Pitch Live, in partnership with IND!E, which sees emerging brands pitch their products live to panels of leading retailers, has expanded for 2025 and will have its own dedicated stage alongside the IND!E Pavilion.

Confirmed buyers include representatives from Selfridges, Ocado, and Booths, and an independent retailer panel featuring Stefano Cuomo of Macknade, Laura Roberts of Laura's Larder, Sam Morgan of Drapers Lane Deli, Tom Newey of Cobbs Farm, Nicki Stewart of Diverse Find Food, and retail expert and former Superette store manager Greg Ivison, bringing together some of the most respected voices in the sector. Matt & Hannah Hopkins, founders of IND!E, say, "We're thrilled to be back at the Speciality & Fine Food Fair in an even bigger way for 2025. Pitch Live, which this year forms part of IND!E's pavilion, has become one of the most exciting opportunities for challenger brands in the UK to get in front of serious retail buyers, and the energy in the room is always electric. Working with the team at the show to elevate small brands and bring fresh innovation to the market is a real privilege, and we can't wait to see what this year's line-up brings." An Ocado spokesperson adds, "Pitch Live at Speciality Fine Food Fair with IND!E is one of the standout events in our calendar for discovering emerging talent. It gives us a front-row seat to some of the most exciting new brands in food and drink, and a direct line to the founders behind them. The format is fast-paced, energetic, and full of potential, exactly the kind of environment that breeds retail success."

John Gill, head of marketing and trading at Booths, adds, "Booths are delighted to be involved in this year's Pitch Live event at Speciality & Fine Food Fair. The event provides an amazing opportunity to meet new, innovative, upcoming food and drink brands. Booths are dedicated to seeking out the very best in food and drink, and we are really looking forward to seeing the quality that's on show."

> The format is fast-paced, energetic, and full of potential, exactly the kind of environment that breeds retail success





CONNECTING WITH THE FINE FOOD COMMUNITY

New for this year's event is The Village Square, a dedicated area in the heart of the Fair for networking, sampling and making valuable industry connections.

In the world of food and drink and retail, connections are everything. Whether it's discovering the next game-changing product, forming new distribution partnerships, or exchanging knowledge with like-minded professionals, face-to-face interaction remains a vital part of doing business. The Village Square has been created with this in mind: a central, vibrant space designed to foster meaningful conversations and open new doors.

Across the two days of the event, this all-new feature will host a series of interactive and curated sessions, with industry leaders like Invest NI, Cotswold Fayre and Diverse Fine Food presenting a handpicked selection of brands. Appliance specialist Dualit will also host an exclusive session, bringing together retailers and fowodservice buyers to learn about its latest innovations.

Earlier this year, Speciality Food magazine and Speciality & Fine Food Fair joined forces to spotlight exceptional regional producers from across the UK. This collaboration has led to a unique showcase within the Village Square, where visitors can meet and sample from businesses such as Carmarthen Deli, Nunc Living, Busy Bees, Clandeboye, Radnor Preserves and Suffolk Meadow. It's a rare opportunity to connect with the people behind the products, understand their stories, and form relationships that could shape future ranges or retail strategies.

The Village Square is more than just a new feature, it's a reflection of the Fair's role as the home of fine food: a place where passionate producers, buyers, chefs and retailers come together to build lasting connections and grow their businesses.

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CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN SPECIALITY FOOD AND DRINK

The Speciality & Fine Food Fair Awards shine a spotlight on the most exciting talent, products, and businesses in the world of artisan food and drink. Taking place on day one of the Fair, the Awards will celebrate remarkable achievements across the sector, from cutting-edge product development to the independent retailers championing quality, sustainability, and community impact.

Categories include Outstanding Regional Star, Outstanding Industry Champion, and Best DEI Champion, alongside accolades for outstanding retailers and standout new products both from the UK and overseas.

Nicola Woods, event manager for Speciality & Fine Food Fair, said, "These awards are all about championing the passion, creativity and resilience that define our sector. Whether it's a beautifully crafted new product or a retailer going above and beyond for their community, the shortlist reflects the very best of speciality food and drink in 2025."

"It's an incredible honour to be shortlisted for the Speciality & Fine Food Fair Independent Retailer Award," says Miles Nicholas, director at Morgans Butchery Ltd. "After having to rebuild my life and career following a stroke, this recognition means more than I can say. We've worked hard to create a welcoming, inclusive butchery for everyone, and I'm so proud of what we've achieved as a family."

Scott Winston, SME Brand Consultant and judge for the New Product of the Year categories, comments, "It was an honour to once again be asked to judge SFFF this year. The quality and diversity of entries across all categories is representative of the food scene in 2025 and made it hard to pick winners."

Andrew Goodacre, CEO of BIRA and judge for the Independent Retailer categories, adds, "These awards are so important. Indie retailers are facing so many challenges and so it is fantastic to see and recognise innovation, brilliant retailing and success in this way. These awards remind me that this sector has so much talent and so much to offer."



THE SHORTLIST IS:

LARGE INDEPENDENT RETAILER OF THE YEAR, SPONSORED BY WBC AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BIRA

- Nourished Communities
- Valentina Deli
- Farmer Copleys Farm Shop Ltd

SMALL INDEPENDENT RETAILER OF THE YEAR, SPONSORED BY WBC AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BIRA

- Morgans Butchery Ltd
- The Norfolk Deli
- Club Soda
- French & Day Delicatessen

NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR – INTERNATIONAL

- Brigidini di Lamporecchio by Rinati Srl
- Kimchi Ketchup by Chimac
- Hermione by Olivian Groves
- Jara 100% Wild Honey by TFELI LLC

NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR – UK

- Mushroom Risotto by Norfolk Mushroomery
- Zaatar Passata by Terra Rossa
- Two Farmers 0.0% Apple Cider by Two Farmers Cider
- Sweet Dill Pickle Chips by Pickle Project

NOT YET ON THE SHELF

- Smoked Cornish Mackerel by Hevva!
- Full Power Cacao by Full Power Cacao
- Glen Keen Estate Irish Cream Liqueur by Glen Keen Estate Ltd
- 2.5 Brut by Nunc Living Ltd
- Sal de Ibiza D'l Vera by D'l Vera Group

Find out more about everything happening as part of this year's event, and secure your trade ticket, at specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk.

NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: Kensington Olympia, London
WHEN: 9th-10th September 2025
WEB: specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk

> "Indie retailers are facing so many challenges and so it is fantastic to see and recognise innovation, brilliant retailing and success in this way. These awards remind me that this sector has so much talent and so much to offer"

EMILIA'S CRAFTED PASTA

STAND 1066

Emilia's Crafted Pasta is an award-winning range that brings the heart of Italian tradition to your shelves. Made exclusively from 100% Italian wheat and pure mountain spring water, each shape is bronze-die extruded and slow-dried at low temperatures to create a rich flavour and a sauce-hugging, textured surface. Crafted using time-honoured techniques, Emilia's offers a truly authentic and elevated pasta experience. Thoughtfully packaged in 100% recyclable paper, the range meets the growing demand for sustainability and provenance - ideal for those seeking premium, artisanal products that embody quality, authenticity, and traditional Italian craftsmanship.

emiliaspasta.com



WILLOW CREEK

STAND 3528

World Class Extra Virgin Olive Oil now has a new accent! Nestled in the Nuy Valley around 80 miles east of Cape Town, at the foot of the majestic Langeberg Mountains, lies the Willow Creek Olive Estate. With the lime-rich soils and Mediterranean climate of the Nuy Valley offering an ideal terroir for olive cultivation, our estate has now been farming and producing world class Extra Virgin Olive Oil for almost 30 years. Now proudly servicing UK retailers & distributors with one of the most decorated ranges of EVOO and Balsamic Reductions anywhere, we welcome you to come and sample one of the best kept secrets in the industry on stand #3528.

willowcreek.co.za/



WINE THAT'S FRUIT

STAND 3680

Wine That's Fruit is a family-run business bringing the fun back into wine! Their wines are made from delicious fruits other than grapes and crafted in Herefordshire using local, natural ingredients. With four exciting flavours to choose from, they're sulphite-free, vegan-friendly, and naturally gluten-free – no nasties here! Each one comes in a super handy 250ml can, perfect for any occasion.

winethatsfruit.com



DTM PRINT

STAND 1211

Meet Eddie, at the stand of DTM Print, the innovative edible ink printer designed for passionate bakers, confectioners and pastry chefs. This compact, home-sized direct-to-food printer allows you to create personalised edible designs by printing directly onto treats, eliminating the need for icing sheets and saving valuable time. Using 100% safe, flavourless and aroma-free edible ink, Eddie is suitable for Halal, Kosher, Vegan and nut-allergic consumers. Versatile and easy to use, it can print photos, logos, text and graphics on a variety of foods, including biscuits, macarons, marshmallows, M&Ms, ice cream wafers, and white chocolate discs – perfect for elevating culinary creations.

dtm-print.eu





AUTHENTICALLY ASIAN

East Asian flavours and ingredients are experiencing hot demand this year. *Speciality Food* investigates

COMMENTATORS



HARRY WOOLF-EVANS
REUBEN'S



STEVEN SALAMON
WALLY'S DELI



EYAN CHAN
CHILLI CHAN



CINDY ROBERT
THE KOREAN PANTRY



KATIE SANDERSON
WHITE MAUSU

Dashi broths. Sriracha-infused swicy hot honey. Chilli crisp. Kimchi. Asian flavours and Asian cuisine are dominating sales at many specialist retailers right now.

Their bright, crisp, hot, aromatic and exciting flavour profiles seem to be resonating with consumers, inspired by the sauces, pickles and seasonings they've picked up on their travels, and by an endless stream of international food content fed to them on social media.

Shoppers want to recreate Chinese hot pots, tangles of noodles in fiery dressings, Korean barbecue and more, all within the comfort of their own homes.

Across the board, both retailers and producers have been noticing a growth in Asian food and ingredient sales in response.

Harry Woolf-Evans, founder of Reuben's butchery and deli in Suffolk, has upped the range of Asian foods he carries in store following almost a year of increased demand. "Outside of our fresh and cooked range, White Mausu is the thing that sells most for us," he says.

"Everyone gets so excited about it when they come in, talking like they're White Mausu addicts. I think the appeal is it works all day – from eggs in the morning, to dinner at night. Everyone seems to be eating it!"

As an independent shop, championing smaller, more niche producers is key, Harry adds, saying he's noticed a flurry of Asian flavours coming to market – calling them a deli owner's dream. "Asian food, especially East Asian, is really having its moment. Absolutely I think it's because of the growth of social media and recipes being available online for people to experiment with. The best part for me, personally, about that part of Asia and cooking is you can get so much flavour into a dish with very little work. The ingredients pack a punch."

Steven Salamon, owner of Wally's Deli, has similarly noticed increased interest in Asian ingredients, particularly Korean and Vietnamese spices, sauces and relishes, adding that he thinks they've risen up as Thai ingredients and flavours have peaked. "We just haven't seen a lot of innovation there," he explains. "Travel to Vietnam has opened up a huge amount of tourism, and we're certainly seeing a lot of interest in authentic Vietnamese products." Customers are also being drawn to kimchi, gochujang and different types of miso. "They're not really worried about the brand," he adds. "It's the authenticity they want."

Specialist retailer, The Asian Cookshop, has experienced huge growth recently due to public excitement around Asian ingredients, says director Alom Noor. "Over the last two years, we've seen more interest in items that we would class as 'hard to find', or previously 'unknown' to the general public, selling out within days," he explains, saying boosts in sales of certain items can invariably be traced back to trending online recipes.

"Social media has a huge influence," he continues, "with recipes and 'how to' videos all over TikTok and Youtube showcasing the variety and the very best Asian dishes.

"People can take a screenshot of the ingredients required, go to our online shop to buy exactly what they need, and get it delivered to their door. Then they can watch (and rewind back) the video to follow exactly how the dish is prepared – all from the palm of their hands!"

Growing speciality food app, DELLI, is blossoming with an ever-growing range of Asian products from small independent makers – and consumers can't get enough of them says Octavia Pendrill-Adams, head of brand and content.

"Asian flavours bring bold, vibrant and authentic tastes that are fresh and exciting for today's adventurous eaters. At DELLI we see this as part of a bigger movement where consumers crave real, story-driven food experiences that go beyond the usual. The surge in demand for chilli-infused products, like the Malaysian Chinese style chilli oil from Mama Yu, or unique blends from Dudu Eats and Poon's, shows how people want flavours with personality and heritage."

Chilli products, Octavia continues, have grown in sales fivefold since 2023. "We've had record-breaking drops, like Mama Yu's chilli oil selling out 1,000 jars in just 40 minutes. Asian-inspired products, sauces and condiments are definititely riding this wave of growth as our makers quickly respond to what the community wants."

"Asian flavours deliver boldness, balance, comfort and complexity in every bite," says Eyan Chan, founder of Chilli Chan. "People want that more than ever. There is a growing







8 TRENDING ASIAN CONDIMENTS AND SEASONINGS

RAYU
A Japanese condiment, made by tempering chillies and other aromatics in nutty sesame oil.

CHILLI CRISP
Crunchy, umami, salty, sweet, umami and hot, this is a versatile friend in the kitchen, marrying crispy chilli (and often shallots and garlic) in oil.

GOCHUJANG
A savoury, sweet, spicy fermented Korean chilli paste, used as a base for dressings, sauces and marinades.

TOGARASHI
Citrus peel, dried red pepper, seaweed, sesame seeds and peppercorns combine in this warming, aromatic spice blend for sprinkling over noodle and ramen bowls (and everything else).

XO SAUCE
Incredibly savoury, rich and deep, this speciality of Hong Kong is made with a range of changeable ingredients but often dried shrimp, dried scallop, chillies and garlic.

SRIRACHA
Thailand's ubiquitous hot sauce, made with chillies, vinegar and pickled garlic.

SSAMJANG
The star of this Korean paste is rising. It's made with fermented soy beans, gochujang, sesame oil and fragrant garlic and onions.

KECAP MANIS
Popping up as an ingredient in sauces and marinades (especially for wings) this is an Indonesian sauce with a palm sugar and soy base.



and bulgogi were. Now all these dishes and condiments are on the shelves of supermarkets, and everyone has seen Korean-inspired dishes on restaurant menus. Of course, you can't deny the role of social media too – making Asian dishes trendy and more widely known. People want bold, exciting flavours, and Asian cuisine offers a wealth of options in that department!"

What's trending?

Far East Asia is where it's at, says Yep founder Tom Palmer, who adds that two star players are gochujang and miso. "They're in so many recipes now. Miso had its 'moment' perhaps five or six years ago, but it still seems to be such a prominent thing. Every restaurant I go to now, whether it's Western or Asian, seems to have something with miso in on the menu. It's found its way into everything, which I think is amazing for such a traditional ingredient."

In terms of Chinese products, Tom is seeing Sichuan food gaining popularity, as more dedicated Sichuan restaurants pop up, but adds for a truly authentic taste, the component ingredients of any Sichuan sauce, product or ingredient really need to come from that region. "Making Sichuan oil without using Sichuan chillies or peppercorns makes a huge difference. That's how we've got to where we are. It's the same as noticing the differences between Italian and Greek olive oil."

Alom is experiencing heightened demand for spices which are also being considered for their medicinal benefits, like turmeric and ajwain, as well as surges in sales of Korean ingredients like gochujang paste and toppoki (a kind of Korean noodle/dumpling).

He's also noticed growth for SamYang noodles and cup noodles, as well as curry kits. "We see this trend towards easy-to-cook, authentic convenience meals as developing significantly," he reveals. "We also see the demand for customers looking to cook with more authentic ingredients only growing."

Wellbeing has a part to play in consumer decisions too, says Cindy. "There is strong demand for products that support health and wellness,



particularly those focused on gut health, which is a key benefit of fermented foods like kimchi. There is a whole new generation of products, like kimchi salt, kimchi ketchup and chilli crisp oils which are sure to add umami to your everyday cooking with convenience, even if you don't have the time or knowledge to cook from a particular cuisine."

Convenience us also a factor, says Octavia, who thinks consumers are after products that deliver real Asian flavours with quality ingredients, "but that also fit into busy lifestyles – easy to use and packed with taste".

White Mausu founder, Katie Sanderson, agrees. "We live in busy times," she says. "I think people are searching for ways simple, quick food can be elevated, and I think chilli oil, with its crunch and texture and layers of flavour, is a great way of doing that."

Katie says she tends to look to the States for forecasting, and reports she's seeing a great deal of traction around upmarket noodles, which are beginning to filter into the UK market, alongside squeezy barbecue-style bottles of sauce. "We did a barbecue sauce last year which was similar to our Black Bean Rayu, mixing it with extra spices over a ketchup base. It was very earthy and umami – people went mad for it," she says.

Why should retailers be taking notice?

Tom thinks the category is ripe for experimentation across a wider range of products because of its ambient nature. Have fun. Try something new. "You've got a really long time to sell these things because they have longer shelf lives," he says. "The Asian category is so diverse, and there are so many options, you could easily stock three, four or five brands and they will sell. They look great on the shelves. And there are lots of ways to get new customers on board with them because they have so many uses. I'll put chilli crisp on cold pizza from the fridge, on crumpets with a bit of butter, and I mix my brown sauce with chilli crisp now – that's my go-to bacon sauce."

Asian flavours are delicious, fun and a great addition to shoppers' regular basket spend, says Cindy, adding that these ingredients and products don't exist to replace something consumers are already buying, but rather to complement their buying experience.

"These products can sometimes feel a bit niche, but they meet the consumer's demand for something new, authentic or innovative. They help diversify the offering on the shelves, and therefore can also attract new customers."

Eyan thinks retailers not already branching out into Asian-inspired product ranges are missing a trick because "the demand is already here". "Asian food is not a trend, it is part of everyday cooking for so many people in the UK. Retailers who embrace this and offer products beyond the basics can build real customer loyalty."

STOCK CHECK



FLAVOUR BOMBS PHO BROTH

Bring the authentic taste of Vietnam to the kitchen by adding one of these 'bombs' to a pan of water.
flavourbombs.com



THE GARLIC FARM ORGANIC TERIYAKI SAUCE WITH BLACK GARLIC

A classic teriyaki, boosted with the sweet, umami, luxurious taste of black garlic. Use as a dip, sauce or marinade.
thegarlicfarm.co.uk



PAYST RED CURRY PASTE

A premium curry paste, made by hand every week and sold chilled for the most vibrant, fresh flavour. Brings the real taste of Thailand to consumers' kitchens.
payst.co.uk



SAUCY PEANUT SALSA

A crunchy sauce, blending chilli, peanut and ginger. Serve over meat, fish or vegetables, ripple through a dip, or use to enhance eggs.
saucynina.com



SEASONED PIONEERS KATSU CURRY POWDER

Handpicked spices and seasonings are blended together to create the perfectly balanced sweet and savoury Japanese curry mix.
seasonedpioneers.com



BE TRUFFLE TRUFFLE PONZU SAUCE

Tangy ponzu, meets aromatic, earthy truffle in this irresistible blend which packs a real punch in any dish.
betruffle.com



WILD & FRUITFUL SRIRACHA KETCHUP

Tangy, sweet and savoury with chilli and garlic. A ketchup with a twist that can be served alongside almost anything.
wildandfruitful.co.uk



TRUEFOODS KOMBU DASHI

An all-natural, 'clean' umami broth, bringing hints of ginger, soy, shiitake and sea kelp. A nutritious base for a number of Asian dishes.
truefoodsltd.com



THE WOOLF'S KITCHEN THAI CHILLI PASTE

Tangy with tamarind, brimming with heat, and mouthwateringly enhanced with tamari, this award-winning paste works in dips, dressings, marinades, stir fries and so much more.
thewoolfskitchen.com



SUBLIME CREATIONS THE XO

This is an ultra premium take on XO sauce, combining fried pork with shredded Hokkaido scallops, chillies, onion and garlic
sublimebutter.com



FINAL CALL

We're creeping into autumn. And while lots of retailers' minds will (justly) be focused on the impending budget, and how it will impact their operations, there's the business of preparing for Halloween and Christmas to think about.

As you'll have read in this edition, Halloween has become a key core activity in speciality, not least in farm shops where it can big as big, if not bigger in some cases, than Christmas.

If Halloween hasn't previously been on your radar, maybe use the next month or so to carry out a bit of market research.

Reach out to brands creating themed, seasonal or autumnal products, from pumpkin-shaped biscuits to chai spiced cakes and cookies, and trial them in-store on customers to gauge feedback for 2025.

And, if you have time, take a road trip to see what other speciality food shops are up to. Are they offering farm trails, pumpkin picking or half term activities and how busy do these appear? Have they altered their cafe or restaurant menu in any way? How are they merchandising Halloween?

Anecdotally farm shops tell us the juice is very much worth the squeeze when it comes to this holiday, and bigger is better.

Beyond Halloween, Christmas is something that should be firmly in your mind. Think about:

• **Considering your gifting range.** What terms can your suppliers offer? It's better to order little and often if you can when it comes to gifts – after all, nobody wants to be lumbered with box upon box of Christmas chutney come 1st January.

• **Getting your staffing in order now.** The students you relied on in the summer months will have plans of their own for the Christmas holidays and might not be available exactly when you need them. Plan your opening hours, see who might be around and build up your rota

• **Using social media more effectively.** Design a content plan now. Work out which products, activities and events you need to push, and measure results to see what's resonating best with the public to help you plan better for next year. You might have a gift showcase, or a digital advent calendar with promotions or a 'product of the day'.

We'll have more Christmas inspiration for you in the October ediiton of Speciality Food Magazine. **We love hearing from our readers. Do you # have a story to share or expertise to pass on? Please get in touch with charlotte.smith-jarvis@artichokehq.com**

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5 MINUTES WITH
DOM RICE, CANS



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
I would probably be in a band. There's a rumour (which might be true) that I was in a band when I was younger... and I love a bit of karaoke.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
Student brand manager for Red Bull. A friend saw the job opening and told me about it. I asked if he minded me applying as well thinking there was more than one position. Anyway, long story short, I got the job, he didn't... still feel bad.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Meaningful progress inspires me. Building CANS for example: it's something that will improve people's lives and will help change the industry and that is really inspiring.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
I once had a job selling financial products. It's a solid profession, but I hated it.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
Working with my amazing team, the vibe is fire!

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
Dealing with our financial data. As a start-up we currently have it all in Google Sheets and it's horribly messy and manual. That bit is no fun.

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
It's messed up, I hope we can help to change that just a little bit with our non-sweet CANS.

TEA OR COFFEE?
Coffeeeeeeeeee.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
A large British Sunday Roast dinner with loads of gravy, followed by a nice siesta.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
Speed is more important than perfection > embrace failure.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
Rotten Shark (Hakarl) – I once tried it in Iceland where it is locally considered a delicacy. For me, absolutely the most disgusting thing I've ever had in my mouth.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
A recent read I would recommend is *The Courage to Be Disliked* by Ichiro Kishimi and Fumitake Koga.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Savoury all the way!



The final word on fine food

TRIED & TESTED



ROSALUNA MEZCAL
As I'm not much of a drinker, when I do partake in alcohol it has to be really, really good – and that's exactly what this mezcal is, as well as being a genuinely new taste experience compared to the mezcals I've sampled in the past. Lighter and smoother thanks to its lower levels of smoke, it's surprisingly versatile. I loved it in a margherita and equally (purists, look away now) in place of vodka in a new take on a tomato vodka sauce for pizza and pasta. An exciting new product to hit shelves.
mezcalrosaluna.com

BOOJA-BOOJA ORANGE SCRUNCH CHOCOLATE WONDERS
Chocolate and orange is a timeless pairing – and with good reason – but it's all too easy to get the balance off. Thankfully, these new treats from Booja-Booja tick all the boxes perfectly. The darkness of the chocolate paired with the zestiness of orange, which punches through without being overpairing, is just right, and I loved how the chocolate flakes coating the outside and the honeycomb pieces inside added crunch to complement the rich creaminess of the truffle. Just sublime.
boojabooja.com



BIO & ME BERRY BOOST OAT BARS
Like many consumers, I try not to let my busyness get in the way of my health goals, but that's all too easily done when tiredness and time constraints hit. These flavourful and gut-friendly bars are a game-changer, and their reformulation to make the texture softer has made them more enjoyable than ever. The berry flavour is fruity and tangy rather than having chemical notes, and I'm sure would go down well with all ages. A handy product which ticks a lot of boxes.
bioandme.co.uk



THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Tom Shepherd, Michelin Star chef at Upstairs by Tom Shepherd



I actually have quite a different perspective on what 'local' means. For me, it's not just about geography, it's about relationships, quality, and craft. England is a tiny island compared to most countries, so when I think of 'local', I think about what's available on our isles. For example, we get our scallops from Orkney in Scotland – some of the best scallops in the world and our seafood from Cornwall, including cod and tuna. It's only around 200 miles from us, which in the context of the UK is nothing. So, while we absolutely support local suppliers, I also believe in sourcing the best the British Isles have to offer, regardless of a strict mile radius.

We've built long-standing relationships with a number of trusted British suppliers over the past 12–14 years. All of our vegetables are sourced from local British growers. For example, during asparagus season, we head straight to New Farm, which is just two miles from the restaurant – they grow the most incredible asparagus you can get. Similarly, when strawberries are in season, we source them from Manor Farm Strawberries, also just down the road.

Our meat comes primarily from a company called Walter Rose and I've worked with a gentleman named Charlie Cook there for over 14 years. He comes from a family of butchers and handpicks everything not just for the cut, but also for the breed, the farming practices, and overall quality. These aren't just suppliers; they're trusted partners who are as committed to excellence as we are.

It's hugely important to us to support the local food economy but we define 'local' slightly differently. For us, it extends across the whole of the UK, which is still incredibly small when you look at it globally. We don't have large food markets in Litchfield, but we do have amazing, individual local producers who do one thing brilliantly whether it's asparagus, strawberries, or meat. Supporting them means investing in quality, sustainability, and preserving traditional skills. It also brings a sense of pride and provenance to what we put on the plate.

I think what matters most is building meaningful relationships, with growers, farmers, fishmongers, and producers. These relationships are built over years and create a ripple effect: they uplift communities, protect craft and heritage, and allow us as chefs to bring those stories and flavours to life. At the end of the day, we're the lucky ones who get to put the final touch on ingredients that have been nurtured with care from the start.

> "For me, it's not just about geography, it's about relationships, quality and craft"

PARTNER CONTENT



LIVE LA DOLCE VITA

Italians are famed for their savoury delicacies. Pasta, cheese, antipasti, oils and vinegars... the list is endless, and very familiar to most UK shoppers. But move into the sweet realm, and the consumer recognition of the treats on offer is much smaller.

Many would recognise a crispy-creamy cannoli, although it's unlikely that the majority of your customers will have tried one, gelato is an increasingly popular option alongside traditional British ice cream within freezers in retailers large and small across the UK, and gianduja is hugely popular – particularly thanks to a pretty ubiquitous jarred chocolate and hazelnut spread – but beyond that, there is plenty for sweet-toothed shoppers to uncover.

Nigella Lawson has an outrageously indulgent recipe for a chocolate pasta dish, but there's no need for your customers to put their aprons on to enjoy the dolce delights on offer. The biscuit sector offers a real treasure trove; amaretti and biscotti are already pretty popular on these shores – soft and hard amaretti serve very different purposes, so stock both if you can – but awareness is also growing of slightly lesser-known options such as cantuccini and baci di dama, and true foodies would be delighted to uncover one they have never seen before, so get researching and stock up.

Crunchy or chewy, creamy or crisp, Italian confections often showcase the classic flavours of almond, lemon, hazelnut or chocolate – but keep an eye out for pistachio variants to tap into the British consumer's seemingly insatiable appetite for all things green and nutty.

Of course, dried fruit plays a large role in Italian sweet treats also. Panforte, panettone and its plainer – but no less delicious – cousin, colomba, are well worth stocking, and consider speaking to your Italian wholesaler about whole preserved fruit peels. These jewel-like mounds of glistening tang come into their own at Christmas time, where a number of recipes call for mixed peel (supermarket tubs are pretty dire).

There are plenty of ways to live la dolce vita through the magic of smart stocking, so step away from your tried and tested savoury favourites and explore the world of sweet Italian delights.





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