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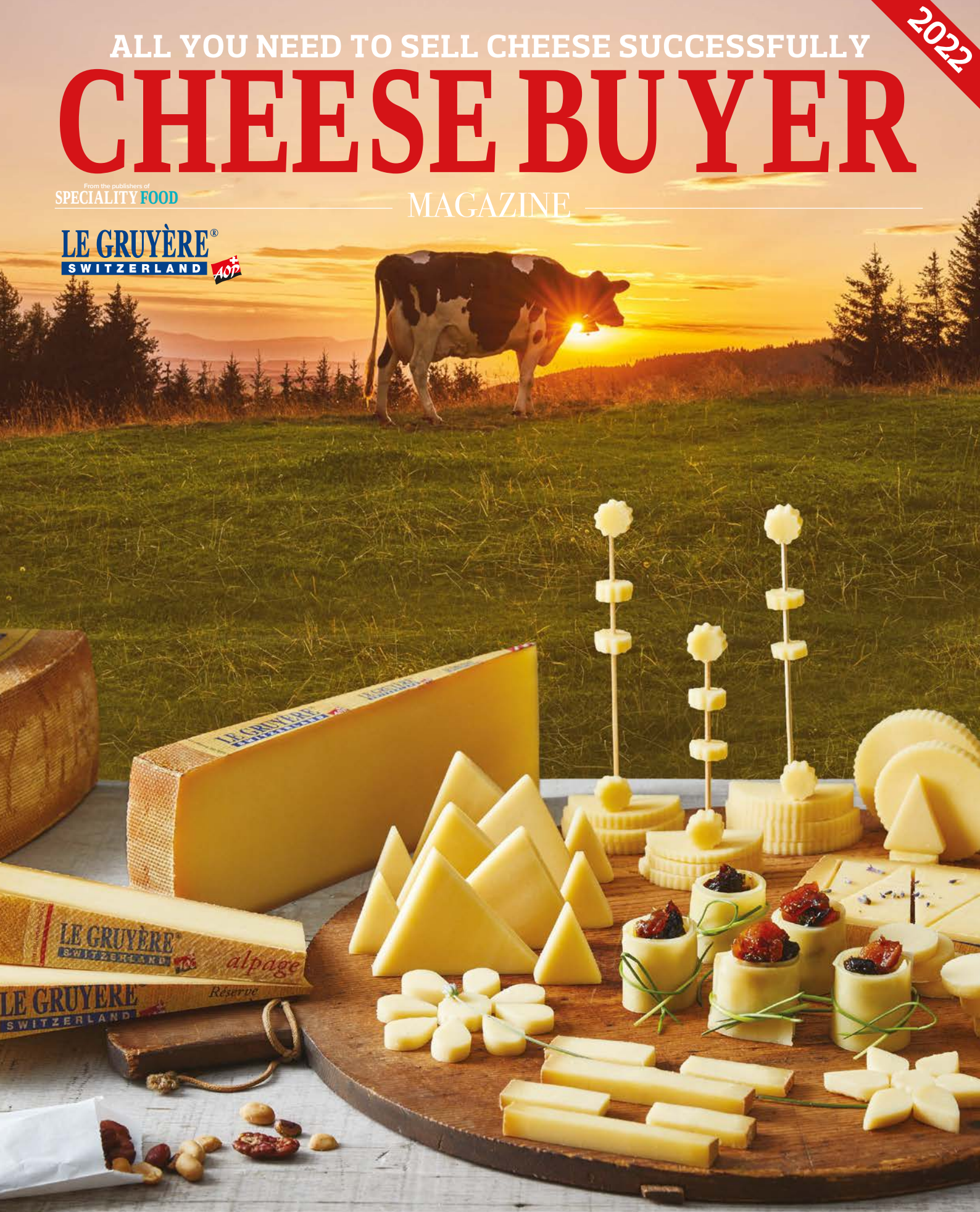
CHEESE BUYER

2022

From the publishers of SPECIALITY FOOD

MAGAZINE

LE GRUYÈRE® SWITZERLAND AOP



MIKES FANCY CHEESE

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WELCOME TO CHEESE BUYER



Welcome to the 2022 edition of *Cheese Buyer*, brought to you by the team behind *Speciality Food*. It's been a turbulent couple of years for the UK's cheese industry, and as we come out of the Covid pandemic there are lessons to learn for us all – chief of which, for the fine food industry at least, is to maintain the levels of support and championing we've developed throughout this period. By stepping up to the plate ourselves, and education consumers about the work we do, we can wave in a successful new post-Covid era for the artisan cheese sector.

Within these pages you'll find profiles of some of the most exciting – and delicious – cheeses and cheesemakers out there, as well as features covering the domestic and international markets and a look at what's to come for the sector.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR

Editor
Holly Shackleton 01206 505981
holly.shackleton@aceville.co.uk

News & Digital Editor
Victoria Smith 01206 505969
victoria.smith@aceville.co.uk

Group Editor
Charlotte Smith
charlotte.smith@aceville.co.uk

Head of Commercial
Sam Reubin 01206 505936
sam.reubin@aceville.co.uk

Advertising Manager
Jessica Brett 01206 505901
jessica.brett@aceville.co.uk

Account Manager
Louise Barnes 01206 508629
louise.barnes@aceville.co.uk

Art Director
Lee Whiteford
lee.whiteford@aceville.co.uk

Accounts
Sue Carr 01206 505903

Subscriptions
01293 312188
specialityfood@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk

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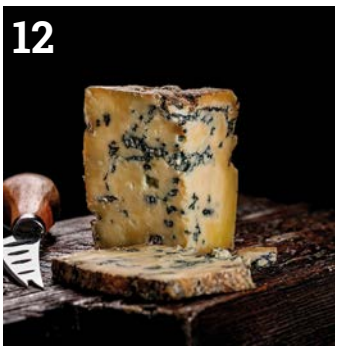
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WORTHY OF ROYALTY

A rich heritage of cheese expertise has given Renard Gillard's Brie de Meaux the reputation of 'the king of cheeses'



The Renard Gillard dairy was created in 1886 in Biencourt sur Orge in the Meuse region. For the past 135 years this dairy, which was family-owned until 2000, has been proudly perpetuating traditions by making an exceptional Brie de Meaux.



The master cheesemakers at Renard-Gillard use their unique know-how, passed on from generation to generation, to produce cheeses of high quality worthy of the motto "Brie, king of all cheeses, and cheese of the kings".

Brie de Meaux finds its roots in medieval times, more precisely in an abbey in Rueil en Brie. It has pleased people through the ages and is now still displayed proudly on our tables, centuries later.

Originally produced West of Paris, Brie de Meaux-makers extended their milk collection area to East of Paris as well. The PDO territory goes from Seine-et-Marne all the way to the Meuse region, across seven departments.

> "Ripened for a minimum of 28 days and handmade using a special Brie ladle, this cheese boasts a fruity taste with hints of hazelnuts"

Brie de Meaux goes through several steps of making and ripening, most of which are manual, which is crucial to make the best cheese possible. Ripened for a minimum of 28 days and handmade using a special Brie ladle, this cheese boasts a fruity taste with hints of hazelnuts.

Exclusively made of raw cows milk, Brie de Meaux is a soft cheese with a delicate white rind. It should be soft and smooth but never runny! It is often said that Brie de Meaux is best enjoyed at dessert, which is why it is consumed at the end of a meal due to its creamy and unctuous consistency.



ARTISAN CHEESE: THE NEXT GENERATION

Three cheese experts share their experience as newcomers in the sector, and their view on how the industry is changing for the better

As the artisan cheese sector licks its wounds after a challenging two years, there are plenty of green shoots of positivity to be found. From cheesemakers established and new creating innovative new products to new retail models, the future is bright.

Here, three next-generation cheesemakers and mongers who have established themselves in the industry explore the past, present and future of the UK's fine cheese scene.

MATHEW CARVER, DIRECTOR OF THE CHEESE BAR

I'm excited about all the passionate cheesemakers we work with. The beauty of craftsmanship in what they do keeps us motivated and drives us in our want to champion them to guests in our restaurants.

The UK's fine cheese sector is evolving through consumer demand; I think the interest in British cheese has never been greater. I think it follows the natural progression of craft beer, artisan bread etc. People like well-made food and drink. We've had three or four new cheese shops open in London in the past two years. That to me is a sign of the demand! Cheese is booming... I mean, obviously I'm biased!

Next-generation businesses like mine are a vital link in inspiring a new generation of customers to take an interest in British cheese. I think it's crucially important that there are businesses pushing things forward and changing the way people eat good cheese!

I've found the British cheese industry to be very supportive. As a whole we are all pushing for the same goal: to get more people eating good British cheese. Our relationship with the cheesemakers we work with has always been really incredible. We value the amazing cheeses they spent time making and they respect our work in getting people eating them!

In terms of what the future holds for the sector, we see a lot of potential in opening more Pick and Cheese restaurants. I feel it does such a great job of changing the way people experience and enjoy cheese.



In the wider industry I'm excited to see what new cheesemakers will start producing in the next few years. We've had a lot of younger exciting makers coming through in the last couple of years and it's interesting to see how that evolves. I'd like to see more collaborations and more one-off cheeses being made – in the same way the craft beer sector has been doing for years. I think that will help create more buzz around cheesemakers and the industry.

> "Next-generation businesses like mine are a vital link in inspiring a new generation of customers to take an interest in British cheese"

MORGAN MCGLYNN, OWNER OF CHEESES OF MUSWELL HILL



I find the most exciting part of the artisan industry is being able to travel extensively in my quest to seek out the world's most delicious and fascinating cheeses, made by the most talented and expert cheesemakers. There is always a new amazing cheese being made in the UK. The cheese industry is forever evolving.

In the UK, unlike other countries, British artisan cheese is profoundly connected to the land, farm animals and people involved in making it. The cheesemakers are the super stars of the cheese industry. The fine cheese industry has a rich heritage and community, but also leaves room for amazing new artisan cheesemakers that have learnt this beautiful craft from many before them.

A cheese shop like mine aims to hand-select the highest quality cheeses and share them so that others can experience and savour the world's finest benchmark cheeses. We use our platform to show as many people as we can how amazing these cheeses are! We would love everyone to love cheese as much as we do.

I started in cheese at 18 and watched my peers get excited about cheese, and I quickly learned that life is enhanced by the flavour, aroma and texture of beautiful, well-made cheeses. Cheesemakers have shared their knowledge, advice and endless discoveries with me along the way.

The UK farmhouse cheese industry has faced its biggest challenges in recent years, with the Covid-19 pandemic forcing many small cheesemakers out of business. It is more important than ever to keep this beautiful industry alive. Seeing more and more people learning about cheese and training to be cheesemongers is amazing.

I am so excited to see how the industry will continue to thrive for many years to come.

> "I am so excited to see how the industry will continue to thrive for many years to come"

MICHAEL THOMSON, DIRECTOR AND CHEESEMAKER AT MIKES FANCY CHEESE

Being both a cheesemaker and cheesemonger allows us to both see what customers want and what cheesemakers are doing and connecting them.

The momentum coming out of Covid will give some new cheesemakers confidence to start businesses, and the current cheesemakers will be bolstered that we were able to make it through such a tough time. We only sell Irish cheese in our shop, and the busier we get the more we are able to help other cheesemakers make experimental cheese and nudge the customers towards them.

I always said as a cheesemaker and monger that we aren't looking for massive increases in sales. We are about changing people's habits. If we can get a customer to buy a small percentage of their weekly cheese with us that's what we are after. Having some great UK cheese shops with passionate people behind them, like Kathy and Andy at The Courtyard Dairy, will definitely inspire people to not only want to sell great local cheese, but also to run their business in a way that helps the supplier with honest feedback.

I opened my shop after spending a week at The Courtyard Dairy, so we are an open book as and I try to give as much time to anyone that wants it for any advice (mainly what not to do!). We run monthly events to tell the stories behind the cheese we sell and create a relaxed atmosphere around cheese – it's about bringing people together. We take our staff on regular supplier visits to connect them with the makers as we are a shop window for them.

I have had a lot of support throughout the years. Since I started making cheese, I have got a lot of experience working for a week or two with a lot of UK cheesemakers before spending a year with David and Jo Clarke at Sparkenhoe Farm. They were very open with all sides of the business, and that helped me get an idea of what is involved – not just in the making of cheese but the business behind it, too. We equity crowdfunded the money to get started so have 100 different investors, meaning that we have 100 people out championing what you do. I had Andy at The Courtyard Dairy buying cheese of that wasn't made yet to help us in those initial months. We had chefs like Niall McKenna buying full wheels direct off us for all three of his restaurants the day I went in with a small sample. We had our wholesaler La Rousse Foods driving us round meeting all their chefs and championing Young Buck for us. Local breweries allowed us to rock up with a table and some cheese to flog when we didn't have a shop, and when we opened the shop we had the support of hundreds of customers who still choose to buy their cheese from us. The small independent food business scene in general is very supportive of each other, as we recognise we are all nice people doing nice things!



> "The momentum coming out of Covid will give some new cheesemakers confidence to start businesses"



MAKING THE GRADE

A nose for quality has created a signature style that transcends cheese at Millbrook Dairy Company. Director Kevin Beer takes up the story





Speaking as cheese grader, I can say grading good cheese is a joy. Every dairy has its own unique character and every cheese is subtly different. The skills of the farmer who produces the milk, and those of cheesemaker, are the cornerstone of quality in our Cheddar. As a grader you have the privilege of enjoying their produce and there's always something new to learn.

Scottish Cheddar makers are passionate about their product, consistently making the best mature cheese using tried and tested recipes. 1057 Extra Mature Cheddar is a characterful Scottish Cheddar, rich because of where it is from and how it's made. Our graders work to a very specific flavour profile that meets 1057's exacting requirements. They then nurture the cheese for between 16 and 20 months until it ripens into the rugged characterful Cheddar we know and love.

Today there aren't as many Cheddar makers in the UK as there were 20 years ago, and sadly many Scottish Cheddar makers have closed down too. The good news is that there are new artisan cheesemakers popping up, and so we need to support them by buying Scottish cheese in all varieties.

The demand for mature and extra mature Cheddar has grown year on year. Over the last 20 years we've seen consumers favour sweeter recipe Cheddars that develop crystals, an open texture and intense flavours. This shift in profile away from the more savoury and farmy characteristics of the past has been a general change across the whole Cheddar market, and was largely led by innovative Scottish Cheddar makers.

We believe our 1057 is the best of Scottish Cheddar, so it's inspired our new 1057 gin, created in partnership with the wonderful Persie Distillery in Perthshire. Our gin is gently spiced with bright citrus and delicate florals, making it smooth and elegant for mixing the perfect martini, G&T or iced tea.





CHEERS TO 100 YEARS!

As Belton Farm celebrates a century of cheesemaking, we explore its enduring appeal

Savvy, longevity and quintessential Britishness... it's fitting that the fox, an enduring symbol of English countryside, has become synonymous with Belton Farm. This year the Beckett family celebrates a full century of cheesemaking at its Shropshire base, home to its award-winning range of British territorials and classic cheeses including Wensleydale, Lancashire, Caerphilly, Double Gloucester, Red Leicester and Organic Cheddar. Provenance matters to the Becketts, who have been making cheese in the same spot just outside Whitchurch since 1922. They start with milk from grass-fed, free-to-roam herds from local farms, and use individual recipes tried and tested through the many decades to create their much-loved Cheshire, Contemporary, Red Fox, White Fox, Smoked Red Fox and vat-made additives Double Gloucester Onion & Chive, Sage, and Port Wine Derby.

The current generation of cheesemakers are working hard to safeguard the future for their colleagues and customers alike. Like many of the oldest rural businesses, Belton Farm has an instinctive feel for sustainability and stewardship of the land in their care. The farm's 420 acres of arable farmland gained organic status in 2002. Justin Beckett is the third generation of his family to make cheese here, and is passionate about conservation.

Belton Farm was an early adoptor of carbon footprinting, reducing GHG emissions by 48 percent since 2009 and planting 15,000 hardwood trees in the last 15 years.

Whatever the future brings, the weathervane that has topped the farmhouse at Belton since 1815 will continue to guide the cheesemakers through the prevailing winds. The motif on the ancient weathervane? A fox of course!

BELTON FARM: A TIMELINE

1922 Stanley Beckett arrives at Belton as a farm student before taking on the tenancy and later buying the farm.

1966 Stanley and John Beckett achieve a long-held ambition by winning Supreme Champion at the London Dairy Show

1973 Cheesemaking moves out of the farm house and into a new dairy. Belton Cheese Limited is born.

2004 A 12kg Double Gloucester bags Belton Farm Supreme Champion at the Nantwich Show.

2012 Red Fox makes its debut, winning accolades for its moreish flavour and delicious crunch.

2021 – Smoked Red Fox, matured for up to 18 months and smoked for 10 hours, joins the family.



COMETH THE HOUR...

The economic outlook is tough, but organic dairy has never been more relevant, says Godminster's Richard Hollingbery

In a time of seriously squeezed household budgets, consumers need extra incentives to splash out on their favourite luxuries; exquisite taste isn't always enough when household budgets are tightening. But Godminster, which has been known for its smooth and rich Cheddar for nearly 22 years, has an ace up its sleeve. In January the company published an environmental audit that showed its farm to be carbon negative, its regenerative organic methods sequestering more than 875 tonnes of carbon each year. In an era when the public debate around climate responsibilities is more urgent and nuanced than ever, such credentials are a huge asset. "Despite the cost of living crisis, customers are still very aware that their purchases have the power to shape environmental policy," says Richard Hollingbery, owner and founder of Godminster. "It's especially important when dairy farming has been under fire as being a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Happily, the benefits of organic dairy go beyond the consumer. It's a proven system that fights climate change, building better soil health by putting environmental principles first and foremost. As we say at Godminster: 'nature repays those who treat her kindly'."

An eco-friendly heritage

This is more than just a marketing motto; life at Godminster Farm has followed the same rhythms for nearly a century (the site has been a dairy farm for more than 100 years, but has been in cultivation for closer to 500). The dairy herd – Fresians, Normande and Short Horns – is almost exclusively fed from crops grown on site, making the environmental impact of the milk produced much easier to trace and creating a closed loop system for waste.

Of course, extensive grazing doesn't come cheap, but retailers can assure their customers that by buying a waxed Cheddar from Godminster they're investing in a farming system – in biodiversity, high welfare standards and land stewardship – that fits with the loftiest ethics. "The most costly side effect from organic dairy farming is simply the fact that as per organic rules our herd has far more field space per cow than conventional herds," says Richard. "The time and effort that we invest in giving our Godminster girls more and better quality pasture is what proves costly. Our yields are smaller than conventional farming as organic farming is less intensive and puts less of a focus on pushing higher volume of milk. One way of looking at it is that our operating costs are higher because we're investing that much more in farming in a slower, less intensive method. In that way, we're investing in our herd, our land, and by extension the environment itself."

Embracing carbon neutrality

Godminster Farm began its journey to carbon negative in the early 90s, when Richard first pondered the question 'can dairy farms ever be environmentally neutral?'

"Ever since then we've been working with nature to create a certifiably carbon negative farm," says Richard. "At Godminster Farm we're lucky enough to be the guardians of our own small part of the larger ecological sphere and we take that responsibility very seriously. What's different now is that we're able to use technology to treat the land better in ways we never dreamt of back when we first started producing cheese in 2000." Richard cites new ear tag technology for calves as an example. "These fantastic little devices monitor our newborns and any change in health can trigger a text message to our herdsman's mobile phone, meaning earlier and better interventions for our youngest cows. It's a 21st century solution that allows us to keep putting our herd's health and happiness at the forefront of everything we do."

Not that all contemporary ideas get the green light. Richard believes that whilst rewilding might be right in certain situations, concerns over food security in this country means dairy pasture and traditional farmlands must remain productive. "As a country we need a balance between nature and sustainable, environmentally-friendly land use," he says. "With organic farming, this is entirely possible."

> "At Godminster Farm we're lucky enough to be the guardians of our own small part of the larger ecological sphere and we take that responsibility very seriously"



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A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

When we think about cheese, we might conjure images of crumbly slices served on crisp crackers with a glass of perfectly paired port, not its sustainability credentials. But is all this about to change?

When it comes to food, sustainability is very much at the forefront of consumer choices. In fact, the latest Trust Report from EIT Food revealed that 75% of Brits are motivated to live a sustainable life, with 54% currently making a concerted effort to eat sustainably.

Sustainability isn't new to cheesemaking, especially in the UK where farm-to-fork production is championed. However, with a national hunger for convenience and cheaper options, some could argue that the traditional methods of dairy farming and its sustainability credentials have been put on the backburner.

Patrick Holden, chief executive of the Sustainable Food Trust explained, "Sustainability of farming practice and the art and science of artisan cheesemaking should always have been partners, but unfortunately, this hasn't always been the case. This is largely because the economics of sustainable farming have been challenging, until now, when the challenges of climate and food system insecurity highlighted by Ukraine have resulted in more and more farmers becoming interested in producing milk in a more sustainable way."

With sustainability increasing in popularity again, providing sustainable cheese options for conscious consumers is more important than ever before.

Sustainability from farm to cheese counter

Ensuring that the cheese in your counter is sustainable is not an easy feat, and there are stages across the ensure supply chain where unsustainable practices can filter in. Andrea Araujo, communications officer at Bayley & Sage described their process for cheese buying. "By using producers and products we know, and have often visited, it is easier to identify good sustainability practices. Building relationships with cheese producers and merchants means that we are able to better understand their values; we like to work with people that share similar values as we do, such as a recognition of the importance of looking after our environment."

"We tend to favour cheese made by small artisan producers, generally those that work with their own herd or local milk. This limits some transportation and helps to ensure the cheese is produced within a localised environment. Our producers tend not to use milk that they have brought in, or that has been transported long distances. As a rule, the producers are using milk that is immediately and locally available to them before being made into cheese."

It's not just environmental sustainability that small artisan producers offer. Patrick explains, "They also deliver lots of cultural and social benefits, including employment, the contribution

> "Be willing to adapt, change and develop the way the industry produces, sells and consumes cheese and make sure that communication takes place in all directions, from the producer, the retailer and the consumer"



> It is important that consumers realise all these benefits because once they do, more and more people will be prepared to pay extra for cheese with a better backstory

they make to the rural community in which they live and better outcomes from their farming systems, including reduced emissions, less pollution, better welfare and food production more in harmony with nature, not all of which benefits for which they are rewarded, hence the extra price. It is important that consumers realise all these benefits because once they do, more and more people will be prepared to pay extra for cheese with a better backstory."

Greener packaging?

With Extended Producer Responsibility legislation (EPR) due to come into effect from 2024, all food producers including cheesemakers are having to reevaluate their packaging and look for more sustainable options. Andrea explains, "This legislation, as I understand it, requires the producer of the product to be responsible for the packaging used after the product has been purchased and consumed. The logistics of this will be incredibly difficult to manage but if it can be, then this will certainly incentivise the producer to reduce, re-use or eliminate packaging completely.

"There is a risk that the cost of this in the short term at least will result in an increase in the cost of the product, which will be felt by everyone in the food chain – including the consumer. Ultimately, this will make everyone more aware and responsible for the need to reduce or remove packaging. In theory, zero-waste cheese could be possible in the future – when and how is hard to determine."

One choice retailers can make to avoid unsustainable packaging is to buy in whole cheeses rather than pre-packed options according to Andrea. "The majority of the cheese we sell is not pre-packaged, preferring to cut and wrap in-store, reducing the use of heavy-duty plastic packaging, much of which is non-recyclable, as you often find in cheese aisles up and down the country."

Wilma Finlay from The Ethical Dairy added, "It has forced us to research the packaging market and find a truly sustainable packaging that is suitable for cheese, which has not been easy. Getting behind the claims takes a bit of doing. Is compostable really better than re-cyclable? Most customers are demanding zero plastic, but sometimes compostable material can be more environmentally damaging than a recyclable one. We are still trialling the properties of different types of packaging with regard to shelf life."

Stephen Fleming, owner of George and Joseph is struggling with sustainable options for fresh cheeses. "A big challenge for us is the amount of clingfilm we use to protect cheeses on display in our counter. There's not much out there at the moment in terms of environmentally friendly alternatives but we're watching closely for when that changes. Hopefully, the EPR legislation will accelerate developments in this area."

Selling sustainability

When it comes to selling sustainability to your customers, Andrea stresses the importance of having knowledge about your brands. "Know their producers, understand the impact of how their cheese is produced, and the effect this has on the environment. Look to source locally where possible. Be open to hearing external opinions, giving them weight and acting on good process or policy changes. Be willing to adapt, change and develop the way the industry produces, sells and consumes cheese and make sure that communication takes place in all directions, from the producer, the retailer and the consumer."

Stephen mirrored these thoughts, "We believe the best approach is to build close relationships with those at all stages in the chain from the producer, through distributors and the companies we deal with to process waste. We then get to communicate these messages to our customers so they are better informed too.

As Patrick puts it, "Quite simply, [independent retailers] can be loyal to the growing number of small-scale family cheese producers who are switching to sustainable and regenerative methods and do everything they can to communicate these benefits to their customers. It is important to visit the farms where the cheeses are made because then they will be able to tell the customers from firsthand experience of visiting the suppliers.

"A lot can be achieved through social media and making sure that the customers of retailers who sell sustainable, organic and artisan cheeses call given the Instagram addresses of the makers. At Holden Farm Dairy we do a lot of communication through Instagram and it is in effect educating our customers."

> Most customers are demanding zero plastic, but sometimes compostable material can be more environmentally damaging than a recyclable one





ROCK OF AGES

Deep in the heart of Snowdonia a remarkable cheese is evolving into a crowd-pleasing classic...

"The flavour is stunning and the setting is incredible – it's a real honour to work with the natural landscape in this way, surrounded by the majestic beauty of Snowdonia." The words of Richard Newton-Jones, commercial director at Snowdonia Cheese Company, which has forged a very special delicacy deep in the heart of the Wales' most magnificent mountain range.

Rock Star is the Snowdonia Cheese Company's first vintage cave-aged Cheddar, and a cheese that sings with the character of time spent in deep caverns. So what does it take to produce something so special? The hunt for the ideal maturation environment for ageing its Cheddar led the company to slate caverns in Snowdonia. The caverns, with perfect natural microclimates, stable temperatures and humidity, have been used for ageing cheese for centuries. The maturation rooms in these slate caverns are a perfect environment to slowly develop the complex umami flavours, sweet caramel notes and long, savoury finish that Rock Star is becoming known for.

Crafted using a very special recipe and profile, only the finest cheese is selected to be transferred deep into the caverns. Here, they complete their 18 month maturation in slate chambers for the optimum development of the Cheddar's distinctive flavour and characteristics. Rock Star's deep cobalt covering is a nod to the mineral palette of the rocks that surround it for its life underground.

The result is a robust cheese bursting with character that has real star quality on a cheese board, but also brings intense flavours to recipes. It's perfect paired with sweet flavours, such as caramelised onion, fig, apple or rhubarb, and is a great match for rich wines and even a dry cider.

"It's a real labour of love to mature a cheese deep underground in such a remote setting and for us, it's absolutely worth it," says Richard. "Rock Star is sure to elevate special occasions with family and friends. It brings a real sense of luxury and wow-factor to the cheeseboard and we have no doubt it will prove an extremely popular addition to the Snowdonia Cheese range."

It's certainly in good company. It was 2001 when the Snowdonia Cheese Company first debuted its award-winning Black Bomber extra mature Cheddar. For over 20 years, its range of bright coloured cheeses has grown into a rainbow of flavours, from Pickle Power (a mature Cheddar with pickled onions) to Ginger Spice (Cheddar with crystallised ginger). It's proved a popular gifting item, with the range expanding to include delicious chutneys and gourmet gift packs.

Rock Star, launched last October, has already won fans for its really intense eating experience and with a deeper, more complex flavour and creamy dense texture with the occasional crunchy crystal. The Snowdonia Cheese Company supplies more than 2,000 cheesemongers and independent retailers in the UK, and its products are available in over 25 countries around the world.

Last summer the company received the the Queen's Award for Enterprise in recognition of its 'outstanding continuous growth within the international trade category'. It's also been honoured at at The British Cheese Awards, Nantwich International Cheese Awards, the World Cheese Awards and Mondial Fromage in France.



"It's a real labour of love to mature a cheese deep underground in such a remote setting; for us, it's absolutely worth it"

RICHARD NEWTON-JONES



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FUSS-FREE FINE CHEESE

With its range of quality artisanal cheeses in deli-friendly formats, Rowcliffe's Clemency Hall range offers valuable solutions for cheese retailers

The finest cheeses of Britain and Europe are classics for a reason; no other food product typifies the lush landscapes as cheese does, so there's no wonder that cheeses such as Brie de Meaux and Montagnolo Affine are must-stock cheeses in any discerning retailer's deli counter.

Icons they may be, but it can be a challenge to source these cheeses individually, not to mention ensuring that they are in perfect condition for selling and in the correct formats to suit your customers' requirements. That's where Rowcliffe's exclusive Clemency Hall range comes in.

Bringing quality, value and exclusive cheeses to the counters of independent fine food retailers across the UK, Clemency Hall – named after the granddaughter of the business's founder, Anthony Rowcliffe – was designed to bring cheese heritage to counters without the fuss. Paul Heasman, inventory manager, explains, "The Clemency Hall range was born out of an increase in sales to a new style of customer such as garden centres, who had the desire to sell fine foods but could not dedicate space or resource to a full deli offer."

Simplifying cheese-selling

While whole cheese truckles undoubtedly look striking on the cheese counter, they can be a time-consuming addition to your range – every cheesemonger knows the stress that can result from precision-cutting multiple portions of cheese from a wheel with customers waiting. To that end, Clemency Hall offers independent retailers a wide range of pre-cut cheeses in deli-friendly sizes; the perfect solution for cheese-loving retailers without the space for stand-over deli counters or dedicated cheese counter staff. Carefully wrapped to maintain freshness a little longer, each cheese is stamped with its own shelf life so the customer can gauge the optimum time to enjoy it.

An award-winning range

The Clemency Hall team at Rowcliffe has tirelessly sourced the very best cheeses from local producers across Britain and Europe, including some of the business's own Italian award-winners, to bring artisan flavour to the fine food market. Included in the range are Truffle Gouda, Comte, Manchego and Gorgonzola Dolce DOP, not to mention surefire hits Feta DOP and 24 month+ aged Parmigiano Reggiano DOP.

The best of the British cheese industry is represented here too, with Westcombe and Keens in the range alongside UK classics Lincolnshire Poacher, Colston Bassett Stilton and Shropshire Blue. There's also a flavour-packed selection of truckled cheeses including Ka Pow Chilli, which brings together Red Leicester, cayenne peppers, sweet bell peppers, jalapenos and herbs; Rocking the Herbs, a combination of mature Cheddar, herbs and mild spices; and Truly Truffle, mature Cheddar infused with flecks of black truffle, among others.

The Clemency Hall range keeps growing, with each new addition to the portfolio guaranteed to provide best-in-class premium quality and artisanal origin. Indeed, in 2021 Clemency Hall added two awards to its trophy cabinet: Silver at the Virtual Cheese Awards for its Victorious Vintage Waxed Trucke and Smoked Splendour Waxed Truckle, and a One Star Great Taste Award for its Taleggio DOP and Le Crêt Gruyère AOP.

An evolving asset

The range has continued to evolve to include items away from cheese and celebrate key events such as the Clemency Hall Platinum Jubilee Vintage Cheddar Truckle. "Covid bought a new wave of customers, as shoppers moved away from traditional deli to easier to shop pre-packed options," explains Paul. "By retaining the Clemency Hall core values of selling quality and provenance, consumers were still able to enjoy amazing products and in turn every sale helped support artisan producers through a turbulent and uncertain period."

> "Bringing quality, value and exclusive cheeses to the counters of independent fine food retailers across the UK, Clemency Hall was designed to bring cheese heritage to counters without the fuss"

Clemency Hall

Expertly Hand Crafted Cheese

Bring quality, value and exclusive cheeses to your counter, all while keeping it independent.

Rowcliffe's very own Clemency Hall artisan range is precision cut for you and carefully packaged into deli-friendly sizes.



Contact us to receive our product list,
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Exclusive to Rowcliffe







A VERY SPECIAL SELECTION

Cheese grader Daan Treur has a lifetime's experience in the finest Dutch cheeses. Now he's sharing his secret finds for your cheese counter



It's no accident that the Netherlands has a global reputation for fine cheeses. whether sold young and mild or well matured into something incredibly intense, its cow, sheep and goat's milk cheeses have been a crucial part of the nation's economy for centuries.

A family affair

Treur Kaas is one company continuing the proud tradition; a family business since 1955, today Treur Kaas is managed by brothers Daan and René Treur. "I grew up with cheese," says Daan, who developed a cheese for the fabulous dairy all around him at a young age. "My father started selling cheese in 1955, and this has grown into a wholesale cheese business that goes by the name Treur Kaas. With more than 65 years of experience, Treur Kaas is your expert in maturing and conditioning Dutch cheese."

Based near Woerden, a central city in the heart of Gouda country with a historic cheese market at its centre, Treur Kaas matures the very finest Dutch cheeses at its warehouse in the midst of grazing cows. Mastering the ageing of Holland's domestically produced cheeses is very much a speciality, and at any given time its warehouse can be home to 1.3 million kilos of this famous dairy.

Daniel's Selection

While Treur Kaas has won a reputation for its care and quality when it comes to ripening cheeses, the brothers have learned a few things about discovering, improving and curating fine cheeses too. Last winter the company launched Daniel's Selection, a new export line that showcases premium and organic cheeses, made by Holland's most passionate cheese makers and hand-picked by Daan. "I was literally brought up in between the cheeses," he explains, hinting at the many years of experience it takes to develop expertise in grading and ripening cheeses. "I select the cheeses using smell, taste and touch, and only the best are included in Daniel's Selection. Using these principles, a great selection of varied cheeses has been created!"

A cheese for all seasons

Made from cow's milk, goat's milk, sheep's milk and Jersey milk – some pasturised, some raw – Daniel's Selection includes both mild and aged cheeses to make sure you're offered the whole spectrum of flavours, aromas and textures that Dutch cheese can offer. Its portfolio runs from Young Cow's Milk – just four weeks old for a beautifully creamy and soft paste – right up to the Cow's Milk X.O.C, with a crumbly texture and ripening crystals. The range also includes a rainbow selection of herbed and spiced cheeses, from the deep ruby Red Pesto truckle to a black-rinded Truffle and even the pistachio-coloured wasabi – a great choice for your more adventurous customers!

You – and your customers – can learn more about the Dutch cheese makers that produce every wheel that makes it into the Treur Kaas ripening rooms for Daniel's Selection at danielsselection.com. You'll meet makers like CONO – a climate neutral farmer's co-operative that's around 100 years old and makes its cheeses in the UNESCO world heritage site of Beemsterpolder. Daniel's Selection brings such makers right into your cheese counter, and their wares into the basket of an appreciative British consumer.

So far, 2022 has proved to be a busy year for Treur Kaas. The company showcased Daniel's Selection to innovation hungry buyers at Paris's Salon du Fromage in February and Belgium's Tavola '22 in March. British buyers should look out for an opportunity to sample the hugely varied cheeses in Daniel's Selection at June's International Cheese & Dairy Awards in Staffordshire. "Experience the taste of these unique cheeses yourself!" encourages Daniel. "Together with our sales and marketing support we offer a great concept to stimulate your cheese sales."

> "We offer a great concept to stimulate your cheese sales"

Daniel's Selection

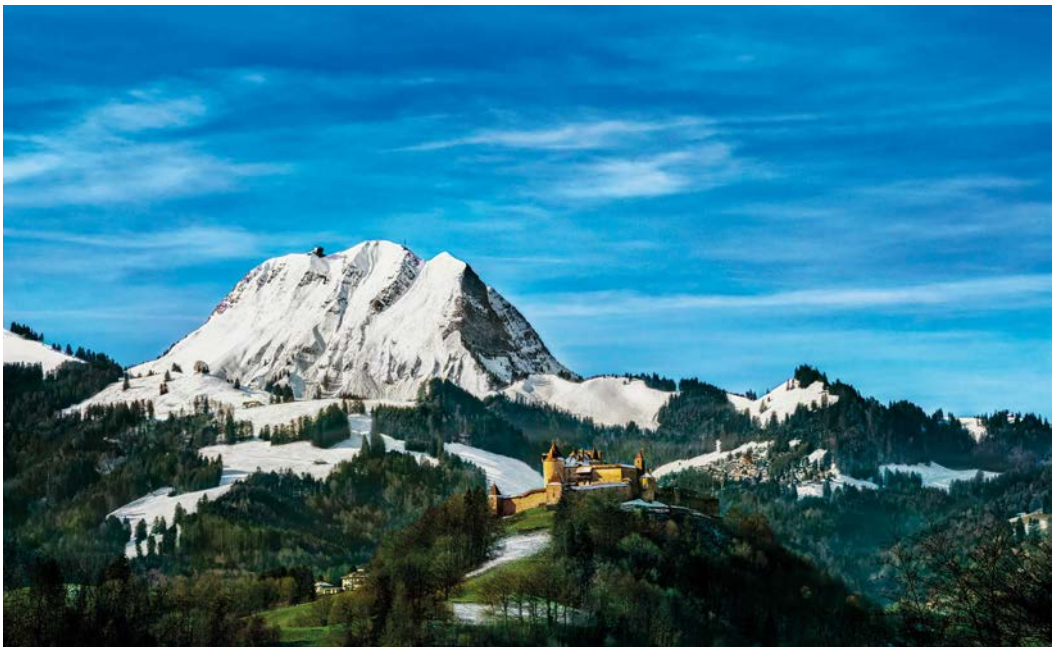
Unique cheeses selected by Daniel Treur. The Daniel's Selection range consists of both premium and organic cheese. Matured in our own warehouse to develop the best flavour!



Meet our new brand!

TREUR KAAS
The Dutch Cheese Experience

www.danielsselection.com | sales@danielsselection.com



> The rules which govern the consistency and quality of this cheese ensure that the finished product has the unique and subtle flavours which lift Le Gruyère AOP above anything machine-made

CENTURIES OF GOOD TASTE

A family favourite for centuries, Le Gruyère AOP brings the true taste of the Swiss mountains to your cheese counter

At a time when provenance is so important, Le Gruyère AOP's is impeccable. The 160 small dairies which produce the cheese (often making only 14 wheels daily) are governed by the AOP specifications which ensure that the cheese is consistent, made to the highest standards possible and entirely traceable, from the cows which supplied the milk, right through to the affineur who aged it and beyond.

Every step in the production of this extraordinary cheese is carefully recorded. No sooner has the milk arrived at the dairy than a sample is taken which will be held for six months so that any imperfection can be traced back to the supplier. It is very much in the producer's interest to achieve the highest standards for his wheels of Le Gruyère AOP, as each wheel is graded and the producer is paid according to how many points his cheese scored.

The true taste of rural Switzerland

This is a cheese which rests on a bedrock of tradition and history. Le Gruyère AOP has been made in the Gruyère region and then in the Swiss cantons of Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Jura, Vaud and the Bern area since the twelfth century, which has allowed plenty of time for the cheese to reach its present – some would say perfect – state. But, of course, it's the taste of Le Gruyère AOP which has ensured its longevity and present fame. Ranging from delicately floral to deeply nutty, these flavours originate in the milk of the Alpine cows and this milk achieves its unique flavours because of the lush hillside grasses on which the animals are fed.

The small but interesting variations in the flavours of Le Gruyère AOP are the result of cows being fed on rich grass in the summer and hay in the winter. No silage is used and nor are any preservatives or additives. Le Gruyère AOP is an entirely natural, artisanally-made product, which is made with animal rennet and which is naturally gluten and lactose-free.

An international favourite, made by artisans

It is sometimes thought that such a well established and internationally-recognised cheese must be factory made. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The rules which govern the consistency and quality of this cheese ensure that the finished product has the unique and subtle flavours which lift Le Gruyère AOP above anything machine-made. During production, the paste quality, texture, aroma and appearance of every cheese are all carefully monitored. These necessary rules stipulate that milk producers may not produce any cheese and that cheesemakers may not produce any milk. This allows the same highly-skilled people who produce the mountain-made Gruyère d'Alpage AOP in the summer to produce milk in the winter months.

The freshness of the milk is assured by the ruling on proximity: the small herds which produce the milk which is delivered twice daily to the dairy must be located no more than 12.4 miles from the dairy. The milk must also be poured into the cheesemaker's copper vat no more than 18 hours after milking.

LE GRUYÈRE AOP IS NATURALLY **GLUTEN** AND **LACTOSE-FREE**, MEANING THAT **COELIACS** AND **LACTOSE-INTOLERANT** CHEESE **LOVERS** CAN **ENJOY** THE CHEESE TOO.

TASTING NOTES

Le Gruyère AOP is available in two ages, each of which displays subtle differences in flavour:

- **Le Gruyère AOP Classic** (aged six-nine months). Nutty, sweet and refined – delicious melted and popular with fans of mild cheeses
- **Le Gruyère AOP Réserve** (aged 10 months and up). Aromatic and full of flavour – its complex, mature flavours make it a popular choice for a cheeseboard




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REACHING OUT

Ancient techniques make Switzerland a Mecca for cheese connoisseurs, but sharing the good news means looking to the present and future, says Walo von Mühlenen

When it comes to heritage, Affineur Walo has it in spades. Take the L'Antoine de Fribourg – a semi-hard raw cow's milk cheese created through Walo's research into a 17th century shepherd and mercenary from Gruyère who became a celebrated cheesemaker. Made in lush flower meadows on Mont Gibloux, this yellow-white Gruyere brings all the



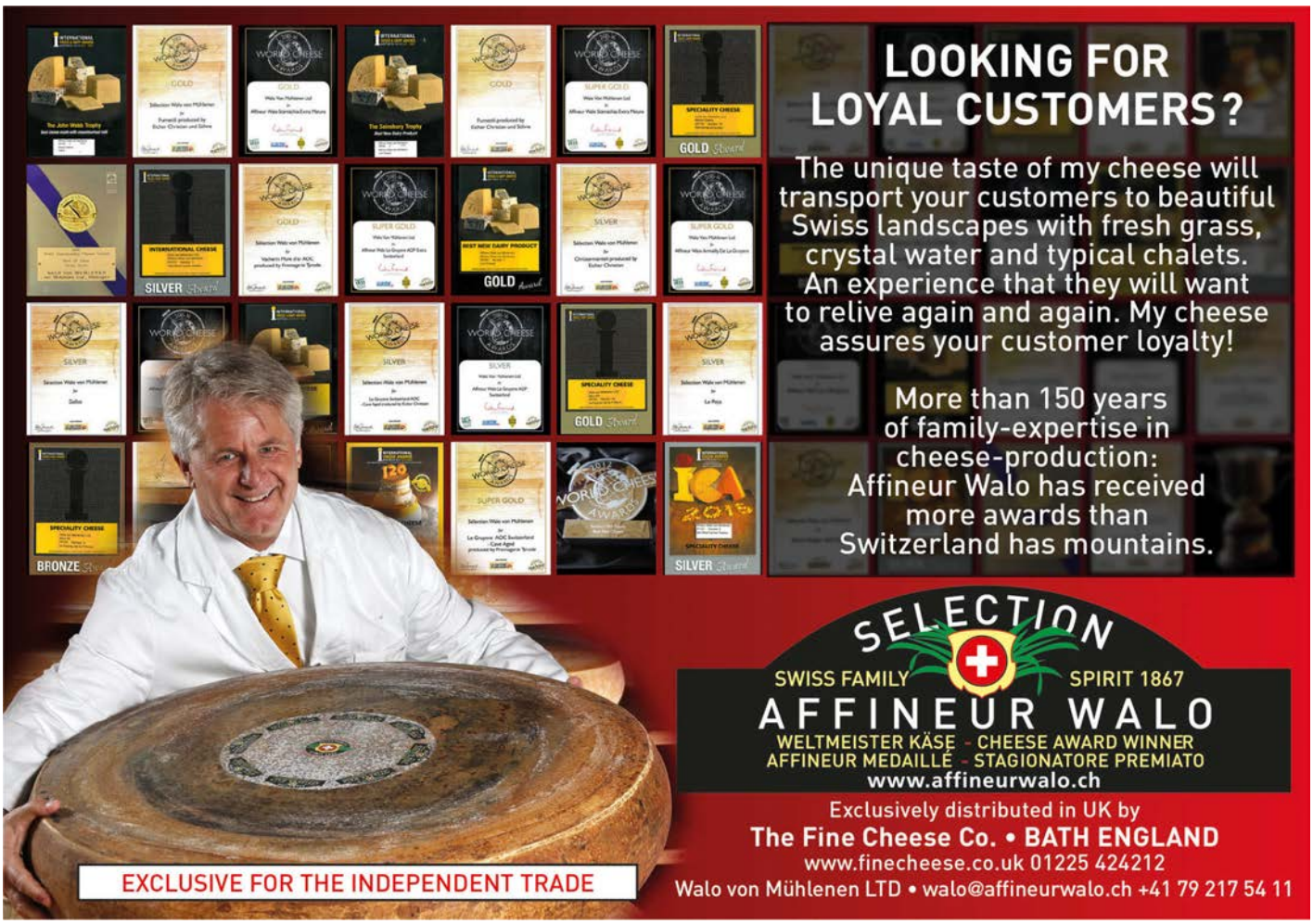
creamy character of centuries of cheesemaking, yet its name is spread in the most modern of social media chatter.

"On Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter we regularly provide tips and tricks for consumers and cheese counters," says Walo. "For example, we present ideas for an optimal Swiss cheese assortment, or answer the question which cheese is best for cooking. These tips are also available on our homepage at any time."

Engaging with established fans and the newly curious alike is a passion for Affineur Walo, and the company has ambitious for spreading knowledge and appreciation of the finest cheeses. "For 2022, we have set ourselves the goal of being present on TV. In print, we will double the number of articles and contacts. The social media campaign will continue, and we will also be more active on YouTube. We have been placing classic advertisements in the specialised media for several years, plus campaigns on social media, classic PR and, of course, our website. We also regularly put information on various topics in our cheese boxes. Currently, there is information about the 'Blumenwiese (flower meadow) cheese with natural raw milk' in all cheese boxes."

Of course, all this activity is primarily designed to support the cheese counters – your cheese counters –that give consumers their authentic taste of Switzerland's incomparable dairy culture. It's Walo's dearest wish that this year "our cheese counters can distinguish themselves even better and continue to sell cheese successfully."

Amen to that!



A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Where creativity meets convenience: how Rougette Grilling Cheese is the perfect new line to wow time-pressed gourmets

An explosion in top-quality meal kits through the Covid era has confirmed what many have long known – that solving discerning consumers' meal problems is a lucrative business. Now Elite Imports is bringing some exciting innovation to the UK dairy scene: a range of ready-to-grill semi-soft cheeses to delight home cooks in a hurry.

The products, created in Bavaria but serving hot Mediterranean summer vibes, come in two tasty flavours: Red Bell Pepper Marinade and Herb Marinade. Each cow's milk cheese is marinated and paired for serving in an aluminium tray. The creamy, Feta-like cheese can be warmed on each side and chopped into a salad, blasted with heat to fill a superior melty cheese sandwich, topped with vegetables and roasted for a fabulous vegetarian meal or even melted into a delicious dip, perfect for a crowd.

The easy-to-serve cheese is also perfect for the barbecue, its reusable and recyclable aluminium tray making a no-mess serving dish for this deliciously melty cheese. The two 90g portions, paired into a 180g pack, serve two adults or make a great sharing dish for friends. "We're excited to see our Rougette Marinated Grilling Cheeses bring family and friends together this summer," says Mick Acuta, sales manager at Elite Imports Ltd. "Now cheese lovers can enjoy natural, speciality cheeses in a totally new way."

The Rougette Marinated Grilling Cheeses are just the latest innovation from Elite Imports' producing partner Käserei Champignon, a family-owned business that has been making cheese in Bavaria for more than 100 years. It also makes Cambozola, Montagnolo Affine and Grand Noir, bringing this esteemed collection bang up to date with a product that's perfect for 2022's discerning consumer.





> "Now cheese lovers can enjoy natural, speciality cheeses in a totally new way"





INTERNATIONAL FLAVOURS

Ellen Manning explores Brits' passionate and longstanding love affair with cheese from around the world... and makes some predictions for the future

COMMENTATORS



DAN BLISS
PAXTON & WHITFIELD



EMMA YOUNG
THE CHEESE EXPLORER



VICKIE ROGERSON
HOMAGE2FROMAGE

For decades, our cheese boards were filled with Continental creations, from Comté to Camembert and Gruyère to Gorgonzola. In recent years an increasing interest in British cheeses has seen a change in the make-up of cheeseboards, cheese counters and cheese shops across the UK, with many consumers swapping their classic French Camembert for British creations like Tunworth, or Brie de Meaux for Baron Bigod. It's no secret that international cheese has come up against its own challenges in recent times, and the obstacles posed by Brexit coupled with the rise in popularity of British cheese has seen a shift in the balance between the two on our cheese counters and cheese boards and in our delis and cheese shops. According to statistics from Kantar WorldPanel in 2021, Continental cheese added £143.1m in the preceding year (21.4%), driven by demand for versatile cheeses like Mozzarella (37.4%) and Parmesan (23.5%) and more specialist varieties such as Comté (49.2%) and Manchego (32.1%). A not-insignificant rise. But despite its rise in popularity, British cheese still has a way to go before it can replicate its Continental rivals, according to some experts.

Is British cheese outshining Continental classics?

With the growth in British artisan cheese turning consumers' heads, has Continental cheese been rejected? Not necessarily, says Dan Bliss, cheese buyer for Paxton & Whitfield. "There are certain Continental cheeses that consistently have been in the top 10 best sellers," she told Cheese Buyer. "For the past 15 years, big famous cheese like Brie de Meaux and Parmigiano Reggiano still make up between 30 and 40% of the full range on our counters. There's definitely an appetite and I would say that the audience is still there, perhaps more so than ever as people travel more and more and they find cheeses." Bliss likes that British cheese is giving that produced in Europe a run for its money, saying there's a buzz around the likes of Baron Bigod and Tunworth going "toe to toe" with Brie de Meaux and Camembert, adding: "Chefs love them, customers love them so there's definitely popularity on both sides."

For cheese consultant Emma Young, while the bond between consumers and British cheese has strengthened, some international classics just can't be replicated. "This to me is what makes cheese diversity so special. Take Parmigiano Reggiano and Roquefort. There are many good hard cow's milk and blue sheep's milk cheeses, however none which could ever take their crown. Just yet anyway – never say never!" Young, who spends her free time discovering cheeses from around the world via her Instagram account @thecheeseexplorer, has been excited to see more people getting excited about cheeses from countries lesser known for their cheese culture. She cites Cabrales, Gamoneu and Queso Casin from Asturias in Spain as three discoveries she made last year, while Italian Stracchino and Squacquerone are lesser-known cheese that fall into her favourites list. "In terms of countries, when thinking of Japan, I am certain that cheese is not the first thing which comes to mind. However, they have had a very long culture

of cheesemaking and in the past decade or so, they've seen an explosion in artisan cheesemaking. India, Singapore, several countries in the Balkans and even the Philippines are countries I have seen making cheese and I have some very exciting projects lined up."

> "The volume may not always be there – I don't see Japanese cheese taking over the sales of Cheddar any time soon – but I believe there will always be a place in the UK for cheeses from other countries"

The practical implications of sourcing internationally

The love for international cheese may still be there, but the logistics of getting it from the country it's made in to the UK – especially post-Brexit – undoubtedly have an impact. "Continental cheese sales have been increasing over the last five years as consumers expanded their cheese tastes," said Vickie Rogerson, co-founder of Homage2Fromage and MD of North PR. "However this has been dented with Brexit impacting on prices and adding complexity to importing, this will no doubt be further challenged with cost of living increases and higher costs for farmers affecting the global milk price. However, there is still a place for Continental cheese on British cheese boards."

Regardless of the obstacles, Bliss sees her role as a buyer as being able to address those challenges and find a solution. "It's about solving the problems and still getting that same quality product to the market because you believe in it. Part of my job at the moment is going off and finding new things from across Europe." That work has included her looking more to Belgium, which is geographically close yet hasn't perhaps been explored widely in terms of cheeses that will appeal to British consumers, as well as looking at other countries too for previously-undiscovered offerings. "People are a lot more inquisitive about food, they're looking to things that are a bit different, they want to spend their money on quality and experience. And you can travel through cheese, you can go to places, you can try food from places you've never been before."

Looking to the future

With an ever-changing landscape both in the UK and internationally, it's inevitable that the place international cheese occupies on our cheese counters and cheese boards may change. But when it comes to predicting its future, most experts are confident we'll be enjoying it for a long time to come. For Bliss, while making new discoveries and championing British cheese is great, there will always be a place for the "classics".

"There's nothing quite like Parmigiano Reggiano, there's nothing quite like Comté, Gruyère, Beaufort. We don't have the land, the weather, the climate, the space to make that style of cheese. So there's always a thirst for it. I don't think the thirst for Comté will ever slow if I'm honest, I think that's one of those cheeses that people will just come back for time and time again. But it's also exciting that British cheeses are going toe to toe and that means we have to up our game to go and find other things from Europe."

One of Rogerson's hopes is to see more quality artisan American cheese on British cheese counters. "I have always thought it a shame that we were so limited in the import of good quality artisan American cheese," she said. "The World Cheese Award winner Rogue River is delicious but alas very expensive and difficult to import. I'd like to see more artisan international cheeses in our cheesemongers."

For Young, the future for international cheese is a bright one. "As long as we are able to import cheese, it will always have a place in the UK market. If we're looking at changing tastes, we are more likely to become more open than closed with our palates. We are, especially in London, a country of many cultures with palates eager to try new things. The volume may not always be there – I don't see Japanese cheese taking over the sales of Cheddar any time soon – but I believe there will always be a place in the UK for cheeses from other countries."



ROLLING WITH IT

Supplying fine cheese isn't without its challenges, but Harvey & Brockless knows how to move with the times

Cheese was the founding passion of the company, with founder of the company's modern era –former POW Frank Day – first selling unpasteurised Cheddar 'trads' to Harrods in 1970. Today Frank's grandson Simon Yorke heads up the sales, and a nose for the finest cheeses continues to give the company the edge it needs to supply The Savoy, The Ritz and The Dorchester with the very best truckles, wheels and wedges. The company has been through several incarnations over the years, trading as The Huge Cheese Company in the late 80s, and Cheese Cellar in the late 00s, returning to its roots as Harvey & Brockless in 2015.

Over the years the offer has diversified to include the finest deli items, but fine cheese remains at the heart of the business. Of course, supplying even the most prestigious hospitality businesses hasn't been without its risks in the last few years. "The impact of pandemic on our business model was drastic as 90% of our customers were forced to shut or dramatically reduce their offering," explains managing director Nick Martin. "We were left with a huge amount of short life stock we couldn't sell, and as a company that doesn't supply the multiples our options were limited, so we gave what we could to charity."

Furloughing staff and mothballing subsidiary sites kept the wheels turning while the company's expertise in sourcing the very finest cheese was redeployed, and now Harvey & Brockless is able to extend its excellent portfolio of fine cheeses to independent retailers.

"Part of our revised strategy is to build up our sales to retail customers to diversify our customer base," says Nick, "so we're adapting our product offering to allow us to do this, including by adding smaller portions of cheese and shelf-ready pots of sauces and dips made at the business's factory in Worcester.



SARAH MAINGOT

We're so proud of the way the company and staff faced the challenges of the pandemic head on to ensure we supplied our customers with the best range of artisan cheese products with minimal supply disruption; not easy in the current climate!"

"We're so proud of the way the company and staff faced the challenges of the pandemic head on to ensure we supplied our customers with the best range of artisan cheese products with minimal supply disruption"



THE TASTE OF HISTORY

A focus on provenance and cultural roots keeps Fromagerie de Saint Flour's range uniquely special

Fromagerie de Saint Flour is proud to maintain a close connection with every step of the cheesemaking process from its base within the best of the cheese and dairy regions of Hautes-Terres d'Auvergne.

All of Fromagerie de Saint Flour's committed dairy farmers work in a united way as a cooperative, and have been bringing together their solid expertise for 50 years. Its farmers, cheesemakers and ripeners pay particular attention to each step of the manufacturing process to provide the best cheese as well as maintain the region's culinary and cultural roots.

To achieve unique flavours, PDO Fourme d'Ambert and Saint Flour are ripened in nearby old railway tunnels; just one way in which the Saint Flour dairy is championing the local heritage. The natural microflora in the tunnel provides the cheese with an authentic taste and brings out specific flavours to some of the business's veined cheese such as fourme d'Ambert and Saint Flour.

Saint Flour is the natural home of a number of spectacular French cheeses, including:



PDO BLEU D'AUVERGNE

The celebrated PDO cheese with its veined body and strong flavour. Around 1845, Antoine Rousell – the son of an Auvergne farmer and grandson of a Roquefort producer – had the idea of introducing a blue mould he had seen growing on rye bread into his curds. He then pierced his cheese with a knitting needle to allow the flora to flourish.

PDO FOURME D'AMBERT

In the 9th century, PDO Fourme d'Ambert was given the name, 'the big lady with the soft heart'. This will certainly have been due to her delicate taste as well as its soft, undulating texture. Fourme d'Ambert was mainly sold in the market in the village of Ambert, which is how the cheese got its name.



LE SAINT FLOUR

With a smooth creamy, melt-in-the-mouth consistent texture, out Saint Flour has an intense blue flavour with vegetal, mushroom taste that balances between bitterness and saltiness.

> "To achieve unique flavours, PDO Fourme d'Ambert and Saint Flour are ripened in nearby old railway tunnels; just one way in which the Saint Flour dairy is championing the local heritage"





FROM PASTURES NEW

Wales' oldest dairy co-operative may be growing, but when it comes to great flavour, some things never change

Food and farming have long been the glue that hold rural communities together, so it's heartening to hear how these principles are living on through a regional Welsh creamery. It was in 1938 that South Caernarfon Creameries brought together milk from 68 farms to make the most of North Wales' lush pasture lands, and today's 140 Red Tractor-assured farming members are due to swell to 150 over the course of the next 12 months – increasing direct supply to 170 million litres of Welsh milk. Production expansion is afoot, with capacity growing from 17,000 tonnes of cheese per year to 24,000 over a five year period, and more Welsh dairy farmers coming on board to help meet demand. "The whole of the business is owned by farmers," explains marketing manager Kirstie Jones, "so we know every farm that supplies our milk. We collect that milk from them, and have complete control over the supply chain from start to finish. We do all the packing here too; for a creamery of this size that's quite unusual."

A community of cheese

As the operation grows, SCC works hard to make sure quality is maintained. "Our members are all in Wales, and usually multi-generational family farms," explains Kirstie. "We employ a lot of local people in Pwllheli and Caernarfon too." This local investment means a lot for the communities it supports. "It's quite a touristy area so year-around jobs can be hard to find," explains Kirstie. "We employ 160 people on-site – cheesemakers, packers, our technical team who deliver quality assurance throughout the supply chain, and our marketing and sales team. Everything is BRC-approved, AA grade." Despite the changes the Creamery's entire ange still sees open tables to continually stir and drain off all the remaining whey. It is then ready for salting, using the traditional cheesemaking method of salting by hand. "We're lucky we have the space here that we can continue to modernise the factory and expand without changing any of our processes. We just add extra lines."

Into the dark

A firm pride in the taste of home has given rise to one of SCC's most popular lines: two cavern aged, hand-crafted Cheddars – one blended with Penderyn whisky – that mature deep in Welsh slate mines. "Being so far underground the ambient temperature is a constant seven to eight degrees," explains Kirstie. "It's the optimum temperature for maturing cheeses and there's no electric or gas involved." As well as protecting the Creamery from sharp increases in energy costs, the geothermal conditions reduce the footprint of the multiple months ripening which could otherwise have a significant carbon footprint. "It was important to us to find a cavern that was within Wales because locality is important to everything we do," says Kirstie.

The current maturation chambers are new to SCC, which relocated

> "Locality is important to everything we do"

from another slate cavern for better access. Careful taste trials were undergone to ensure the cheese retained every bit of its much-beloved character and the Cheddars are happy in their new underground home. Still, there's some serious work involved in lifting the cheeses into their maturation chamber, where limited space and rock formations make good old fashioned hand-lifting the best method.

The future's bright

Demand for the co-operative's cheeses, and its salty Welsh butter, is high in the nation. In fact in August the Creamery announced record profits, prompting the co-operative to create an online shop which will be launching soon. "We have our every day cheeses: mild, mature and vintage, and a territorial Caerphilly, and they go into market in Wales," explains Kirstie. "Our handcrafted range goes into independent retailers."

As the Creamery welcomes in new farmers, and brings the milk from new pastures into its tanks and through its lines, its indie trade buyers can rest assured that somethings will never change. When it comes to delivering crowd-pleasing cheeses that tell the story of North Wales, South Caernarfon Creameries is committed to honouring its roots.



Deep Underground in Wales...

...DRAGON CAVERN AGED CHEDDAR HAS BEEN MATURING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LLANFAIR SLATE CAVERNS, ADDING A REAL DEPTH OF FLAVOUR TO OUR WELSH CHEESE.

Made to a bespoke recipe at our creamery on the Llyn Peninsula, it is then transported to Llanfair Slate Caverns near Harlech and left to age deep within the cavern.

This traditional ageing process takes place in the original mining caverns, which have been transformed into cheese caves.

Made using only Welsh milk from our farmer cooperative members, our Welsh Cavern Aged Cheddar has true provenance and its story is steeped in Welsh history.



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OVERCOMING THE ODDS

Despite a tumultuous few years, the British cheese sector's prevailing nature proves that there are plenty of opportunities for the future, finds Rachael Perrett

COMMENTATORS



RORY MELLIS
I.J. MELLIS



JAMES OSMAN
NFU



CLARE JACKSON
SLATE CHEESE

Suffice to say, it's been a tumultuous few years for the British cheese sector. Amidst all the changes and uncertainty, many producers and cheesemongers have been forced to cease operations, while others have been buoyed by the support of individuals, businesses and nationwide campaigns. So in the wake of these trying times, how is the British cheese sector faring today? Has the dust settled, and will recent challenges help the industry better prepare for the future?

Feeling the impact

Brexit and Covid-19 were arguably the biggest challenges faced by the British cheese sector for generations. While the pandemic caught many off guard, Brexit has been more of a slow build, yet both have had an impact on businesses that is still being felt today.

"Covid had a direct, quick impact," explains Rory Mellis, director of Scottish artisan cheese retailer I.J.Mellis. "It was definitely more difficult to adapt to, and we're still seeing the impact of it, including changes in buying patterns. Brexit, on the other hand, has had more of a slow impact, and people are now starting to realise the effect on prices and transport, which is trickling down.

"I think in terms of the cheese world, though, we got a lot more exposure out of the past few years," Rory adds. "Things spiked quite drastically, but people have gotten into the swing of it now, and I think it will steadily increase. It's a good thing for the British cheese industry, but you also have the other end of the stick: British cheesemakers who are exporting are finding it a bit more difficult now. But I think all in all, it'll balance itself out."

For NFU chief dairy adviser James Osman, it may have been a rollercoaster ride, but things are certainly looking up: "The cheese sector has seen plenty of volatility, particularly during Covid, as demand shifted from foodservice to retail rapidly," James says. "But on the positive side, we have seen increased cheese (and dairy) consumption as a result of changes in buying habits during the pandemic. While things never seem fully settled, the challenges over the past few years have shown

> "While things never seem fully settled, the challenges over the past few years have shown the resilience and innovation in the UK dairy sector"



the resilience and innovation in the UK dairy sector, which is now in a strong position."

Interestingly, particularly during Covid-19, much of the dialogue revolved around what the 'new normal' may entail. But with many businesses nearly returning to pre-pandemic operations, it seems the new normal is, in fact, the old normal – but with a few tweaks, perhaps.

For Clare Jackson of Suffolk-based Slate Cheese, the lifting of restrictions earlier this year has meant customers feel more comfortable to step into the shop and sample cheeses, which offers her team a chance to upsell. Though screens have been lifted and masks are optional, one thing Clare will not revert back to is using cash.

But what about the e-commerce side of things? The majority of retailers saw a huge uptick in sales during lockdown, but it seems to be a mixed bag for cheesemongers today. While Rory notes that, perhaps predictably, ecommerce sales have dropped since lockdown, for Slate Cheese, this is one side of the business that has continued to grow. Indeed, it's become a priority, along with marketing through social media and regular newsletters to further grow the online customer database, which grew seven-fold last year alone.

Learning from the past

While independent businesses in the cheese sector navigate their way through further challenges such as inflation, staff shortages, supply interruptions and environmental concerns, it seems that overcoming past hurdles could better help companies face future threats.

"Once you've gone through something like this, there's not much that can scare you," Rory says. "It's definitely strengthened us as a business: having the systems in place and updating our website have made a big difference in our overall structure."

For businesses like Rory's, the continuous need to adapt was the one constant during the pandemic, and arguably the biggest challenge. But it's a skill that is still vital today, as James explains: "Learning to adapt has been the key to survival. At the moment, it is impossible to accurately plan or budget, because things are changing almost every day, so being able to quickly adapt is crucial. We also need to see more co-operation across the sector, with farmers and processors working together."

This sense of cooperation, community and networking is key for the sector, and something Clare believes was helped by the pandemic's virtual boom.

"A good thing that came out of Covid was that we connected a lot with cheesemakers and those in the industry over virtual platforms," she says. "I think alongside face-to-face events, that virtual side is continuing, so it's the best of both worlds."

> "The dairy sector has overcome many challenges over the years, and we have no doubt it will continue to do so"

Future outlook

A huge drive to support British farmers, producers and businesses during the pandemic and Brexit no doubt tremendously helped the sector to be in the strong position it is now. And while the messaging itself has slightly died down, sales of British cheese has not. It seems the message is consolidating in people's minds that there are some amazing British cheese equivalents to popular European varieties. Combined with a price rise in European produce, demand for more ethical products and a continued drive by organisations like the NFU, it places British cheese in prime position both locally and globally.

"We are seeing a shift in consumer perceptions, and the drive for local produce and traceability helps our sector," says James. "We are also seeing a huge push to export more, and some really positive demand for British cheese across the world. The UK dairy sector is also working hard to engage with consumers more and tell our story, to help counteract negative press that has been received.

"The dairy sector has overcome many challenges over the years and we have no doubt it will continue to do so. Global demand for dairy is really strong and Britain is ultimately in a good place to produce more dairy. Communication is key – farmers need to be able to work with the whole supply chain and also communicate with consumers."

Looking ahead, there's one thing many in the industry can agree on: as British cheese makers continue to innovate and retailers push local cheeses into people's baskets, opportunities are rife.

"We've always been renowned for Cheddars and hard cheeses in the UK, but I think with increasing prices of European cheeses there are new opportunities for British makers to introduce soft and washed-rind cheese," Rory says. "There's also a good gap in the market for someone offering things like lactic goat cheeses – just taking a few staple classics that are produced in the EU, France and Spain, and making something similar here in the UK – I think that's where the gap is."

"I think the sector is pushing forward with lots of new and creative ideas," Clare adds. "There's a lot of innovation and creativity happening: we've had the new Yarlington cheese in the last month from King Stone Dairy, which is very exciting. The sector is seeing a lot of change in dairy farming and an increased awareness of reducing carbon footprints for cheese production. There's also a lot of creative thinking around solutions to being more sustainable. I feel very hopeful for British cheese."



PERFECT PAIRINGS

From flavourful crispbreads to punchy pickles, taste-packed chutneys and fruity pastes – these products are bound to level-up your customers' cheeseboards

While an array of quality cheeses is paramount to a successful cheeseboard, all foodies know that carefully considered accompaniments make the difference between a good cheeseboard and a great one. First things first, you'll need a selection of vehicles for your cheese – some with a simple flavour so the taste of the cheese can sing, and some with a flavour punch of their own. Next come chutneys, pickles, and whatever else will tickle your customers tastebuds; think innovative and international as well as traditional for optimum cheese-lover brownie points. Here's a selection of our top cheeseboard picks to get the ball rolling – enjoy!

OLINA'S BAKEHOUSE



Olina's Bakehouse Seeded Toasts have become a firm favourite with consumers looking for something different to go with their cheese selection. The products are 'double baked', giving them a crisp texture. Also available in gluten-free, Olina's Bakehouse's Fig & Sunflower Seed Toasts are a firm favourite with free-from consumers looking for a great tasting cracker. The Black Pepper Wafer Crackers are new to the UK and a best-selling product in many cheese shops. They are much thinner than traditional crackers with a subtle flavour that lets the cheese sing!

olinasbakehouse.co.uk

HAWKSHEAD RELISH



Westmorland Chutney is Hawkshead Relish's original Chutney and is still one of their best-sellers 20 years later. It is a traditional dark, rich chutney packed with dates, prunes, apricots and ginger, making it the perfect farmhouse chutney. From cheeseboards to a hearty stew, Westmorland Chutney is certainly an all rounder. The Hawkshead Relish range of over 100 preserves are handmade in the English Lake District in traditional open pans. All products are made with natural ingredients and are gluten-free, nut-free and suitable for vegetarians.

hawksheadrelish.com

DRIVERS PICKLES



Drivers Pickle's fabulous Cheese Lovers Pickle Gift Box makes the perfect year-round gift for the foodie in your life, and is so attractive you don't need to wrap it! This gift box contains three of their best selling accompaniments to any type of cheese, including: Traditional Farmhouse Pickle, chopped and mixed vegetables in a traditional sweet brown pickle sauce; Real Ale Chutney, apple pulp, onions and mixed fruits combined with a real ale chutney; and Mini Onions in Honey & Balsamic Vinegar, mini silver skin onions pickled in honey and balsamic vinegar.

pickle-lovers.co.uk

TRACKLEMENTS



Tracklements believes that accompaniments should enhance the natural flavours of cheese, and its Fruit Cheeses do just that. Quince Fruit Cheese is gloriously jammy with a sharp tang, perfect to offset Manchego or other sheeps' cheese; Damson Fruit Cheese is deeply fruity and rich, pairing perfectly with strong cheeses; and Gooseberry Fruit Cheese is the business with hard cheeses. Like all Tracklements products, these Fruit Cheeses are made sustainably, putting people and planet first, and using only the best natural ingredients.

tracklements.co.uk

WEST COUNTRY LEGENDS



West Country Legends is a range of premium savoury snacks and biscuits made with an all-butter recipe and featuring genuine West Country cheeses. The range is inspired by the beautiful mystical West of England and its famous local produce. West Country Legends are ideal for picnics, parties, with dips, on a cheese board, with soup, with aperitifs or just to nibble on their own. The range includes the best-selling cheese straws in four flavours, plus varieties of cheese nibbles and water biscuits. There are three new-for-2022 cheese biscuits: Wholemeal, Charcoal and Beetroot.

westcountrylegends.co.uk

PETER'S YARD



Rosemary & Sea Salt Sourdough Crackers pair beautifully with goats' cheese; try a soft, spreadable cheese or a mild Chèvre. Poppy Seed Sourdough Crackers are made with black and white poppy seeds and are lovely served with mild, crumbly cheese. The crackers are made with carefully selected natural ingredients and no artificial colours, flavours or preservatives. These include Shipton Mill organic flour, British rapeseed oil and Peter's Yard's own sourdough starter – which is fed daily and allowed to ferment for 16 hours before each batch is made.

petersyard.com

STAG BAKERIES



Featuring a choice assortment of their favourite savoury biscuits, the Stag Bakeries Cheeseboard Selection Box is ideal for gifting, sharing, or livening up any cheeseboard. This selection box offers a variety of flavours and textures, and the mini cocktail size of the biscuits makes them ideal carriers for a wide variety of cheeses. It contains four varieties of water biscuits – Original, Parmesan and Garlic, Chilli, and Rosemary – along with traditional Scottish oatcakes and wholemeal biscuits, ensuring that there is something for every menu and occasion.

stagbakeries.co.uk

THE BEST OF FRANCE

An array of cheeses showcasing high quality, tradition and terroir awaits at Maison Monts & Terroirs

Monts & Terroirs is a company working on a human scale with firm cooperative values.

Since 1945, Monts & Terroirs has forged special links with producers in Franche-Comté who share its commitment to quality cheeses, while respecting tradition, people and the environment.

The business is made up of dedicated men and women who are able to convey their expertise and passion at every step of the chain, and stands for:

Respecting traditions, the regional diversity of its land, and animal wellbeing are values it has held since 1945.



What's in the range?

There's a selection of classic French cheeses within the range, including Comté, Morbier, Raclette, Emmental and Gruyère – all made of 100% raw milk, which preserves the richness of flavour these cheeses are known for, as well as the unique aroma of the regions in which they are created.

The PDO Comte sold by Monts & Terroirs is characterised by a surprising level of richness, thanks to the dedication of its makers. Each wheel is unique and develops a different aromatic profile to the next, meaning that the cheesemakers pay special attention to each and every wheel in their care.



Each wheel is ripened using the traditional hot ripening process for at least six to 18 months, following the expertise of Monts & Terroirs' master cheesemakers, and as the ripening process progresses, the rind becomes darker, the cheeses' springy texture becomes firmer, and its light and floral aroma develops to be increasingly powerful, fruity and smoky with spicy notes.

> "Maison Monts & Terroir's cheesemakers pay special attention to each and every wheel in their care"





Visit **www.lovecheeselive.co.uk** or email **adrian@icda-awards.com** for more information



A DAIRY-FREE FUTURE

With more and more consumers giving up dairy, is it time to dedicate more space to vegan cheese?

Historically, vegan cheesemakers have not been able to come remotely close to creating products that mimic real cheese — no one would confuse plasticky shreds of coconut oil and starch with Mozzarella or Cheddar. And because of this, vegan cheese was dismissed by cheese lovers long ago. But that didn't stop cheesemakers from trying, and over the past few years, their efforts have created a vegan cheese landscape that includes high-quality nut-based artisan cheese that really hits the spot.

According to a recent market research report, the global vegan cheese market was valued at just over $1 billion in 2019 and is expected to grow almost 13% in the next seven years. And with delicious artisan options breaking into the market, now is the time to consider stocking dairy-free cheese and getting ahead of the game.

The pandemic effect

The Covid-19 pandemic affected us in a myriad of ways, but one significant impact was an exponential interest in health. The public did its research, and many decided to adopt plant-based or flexitarian eating to improve their health and wellbeing. Rachel Stevens, co-founder of La Fauxmagerie, the UK's first 100% vegan cheesemonger, explains how Covid sparked interest in her business. "During the pandemic, we've seen a big increase in sales (especially online sales during lockdown periods). We've also seen more people visiting our shop for the first time as they adopt a more plant-based lifestyle!

"The onset of the pandemic certainly increased people's awareness of the risks associated with animal agriculture for obvious reasons. It's no surprise with all the turmoil in the last couple of years, many people are hoping to make the world a better place by eating more compassionately and sustainably."

Ellie Brown, founder of artisan vegan cheese brand Kinda Co. mirrored these thoughts. "I think the pandemic has created a much greater focus on people's health, especially concerning their diets. There has been much publicity on the health benefits derived from eating a diet with fewer animal products, through films such as What the Health and I think the pandemic has really brought this to the forefront of people's minds.

"At Kinda Co. we find we're gaining more and more customers who wouldn't necessarily label themselves as fully plant-based. However, they're aware of the positive impact of reducing their dairy intake and once they've found our cheeses are so happy, they can eat something that still delivers on taste, that also has the health benefits of being made from natural ingredients like nuts."



Innovation in vegan cheese

As interest in plant-based products grew, the race to create the perfect vegan cheese also accelerated, causing a recent period of mass innovation. James Deane, managing director of cashew-based cheese brand Tyne Chease explained this dairy-free cheese revolution: "Back in 2014, the only vegan cheese you could find was what we call the 'supermarket melty' style cheeses. These were the vegan cheeses made from coconut oil, soya etc that were mass produced for supermarkets etc.

"When we launched in 2014, we were the first artisan vegan cheese producers in the UK. We handmake our products using cashews as a base, culturing them, ageing them, and hand forming them into a vegan cheese round that had a natural 'cheese' flavour. We took what the dairy industry had been doing for thousands of years and turned it vegan.

"Artisan vegan cheese companies were popping up in other countries in the year or so before we started but it was a brand-new industry. Instead of quick and relatively easy to make vegan cheeses, the UK now had a product that took time to make, just like dairy cheese. Since then, artisan vegan cheese has boomed in the UK and across the world. We see new companies popping up almost every year, all of which are offering artisan cultured vegan cheese. It's truly amazing to see."

This is something Rachel has also seen in the industry. "In the last four years, we've not only seen an increase in popularity but also an increase in the standard customers have come to expect from vegan products. Gone are the days of customers being satisfied with a block of oil-based 'Mozzarella-style'.

"Now, customers are asking for mould-ripened blues, crumbly, aged Cheddars, and melty Camemberts. This increase in demand for more complex products that are closer to their dairy counterparts is what our business has focused on over the last few years.

Zoe Warrington, co-founder of online vegan deli Nomaggio expanded on these thoughts. "Some Artisan vegan cheesemakers have adopted some of the methods and techniques of traditional cheese-making, which has led them to be similar not only visually but in taste and texture as well. Artisan Vegan Cheeses tend to be a higher-end gourmet product perfect for your grazing board or cheese and wine night."



Artisan vegan cheese vs supermarket options

As Rachel explains, a common issue for customers is that many supermarket vegan cheeses don't deliver on the nutrition, texture or flavour front, as they are mostly oil-based. "That's where we come in, offering wholefoods-based, indulgent cheeses that customers can enjoy on their cheeseboards! Our cheeses sit on the more premium end but are much higher quality in terms of nutrition, creaminess and the kind of richness and tanginess we all crave when giving up dairy."

"We've found our range has helped 'bridge the gap' for many moving from dairy to plant-based cheeses, and we're constantly striving to increase the accessibility of these products for our customers, be it from a physical or pricing perspective."

This is where independents can really overshadow supermarkets, by offering high-quality vegan cheeses that larger, national retailers just aren't able or willing to stock. In this way, artisan dairy-free cheese has a natural home at fine food retailers and embracing it with open arms will enable them to stand out.



Is dairy-free the future of cheese?

The rise of veganism shows no signs of stopping, and only by championing the innovations within the dairy-free cheese industry can independents participate in its bright future.

According to Ellie, the vegan cheese category will explode in the next few years, and indie retailers shouldn't miss out. "It's fair to assume the growth of dairy-free cheese will mirror the huge expansion in plant-based meat products. Giving up cheese is such a barrier for many people who wish to adopt a more plant-based lifestyle. With the year-on-year increase in people switching to eating less dairy, I think more and more consumers will be looking for an alternative. I think there's room for a lot of exciting innovation and new products to hit the market."

As James puts it, "The future of vegan cheese is so high in potential. With new amazing products constantly being created, new entrepreneurs gaining confidence in their ideas, seeing that they will be appreciated and accepted by the world, and food scientists and other creators, starting to dissect the fundamentals of dairy cheese and how those fundamentals can be translated to a plant-based product, it is truly an exciting time to be a part of this industry."

"Some Artisan vegan cheesemakers have adopted some of the methods and techniques of traditional cheese-making, which has led them to be similar not only visually but in taste and texture as well"

LEADING THE WAY

The original cheesemakers, Barber's lead the way with grass-fed cheese

In 1712, the Barber family started farming lands in Somerset, near the rolling Mendip Hills and the village of Cheddar. In 1833 Daniel Barber started making cheese from the milk from his 30 cows. Over seven generations the Barber family have built up a pioneering, award-winning, international business. Their focus is on producing authentic Cheddar using time-honoured methods, along with rich, creamy West Country milk from local dairy herds.

Barber's Cheddar is PDO-accredited, the only mark that guarantees Cheddar that is made the traditional way and in the original region.

Today, the Barber family runs nine farms each with their own separate herd. They also source milk from other trusted family dairy farms within a 30 mile radius in Somerset and Dorset. Purchasing the milk directly from trusted farmers ensures the highest-quality local milk. The Barber's cows are all grass-fed and stay out in pasture for as long as possible, on average for 220 days during the year. The grass grows rich and lush in these Somerset pastures, that have produced Cheddar for centuries. This is because of the temperate climes and the frequent gentle rain, combined perfectly with the fertile soil. The spring grass is highly nutritious, full of sugars, and as the year goes on, the fibre and protein content increases, ensuring the best possible food for the cows.

In the winter months, the Barber's cows eat home-made silage, along with home-grown cereals, wheat, barley and corn maize. All of which means that there is no reliance on shipping feed from other parts of the world. It also means that the farming is as sustainable as possible, with every blade of grass grown used to maximum effect.

Sustainability is central to the Barber's principles, across both the farming and across the cheesemaking business. Barber's cultivates the trees and hedgerows across the fields and orchards, providing a vital habitat for wildlife, and helping regulate the soil and drainage and reduce flooding. It ensures a healthy ecosystem where the soil and grass re-energises and rejuvenates every year, and the nutrient levels in the grass remain as high as possible.

The silage is an impeccably nutritious form of food for the cows. The fermentation process of silage making converts the sugars in the grass to acids. These acids preserve the nutrients within the grass and aid rumen digestion. Feeding the cows the home-grown silage also ensures that they continue to eat the produce of their own terrain, giving their milk, and the Barber's cheese, the unique flavour profile of the terroir.

Barber's are committed to taking care of the land and the animals, and know that this ensures the very finest cheese, and their grass-fed diet makes all the difference to the flavours and quality of the cheese. Their awards and accolades are testament to this. Last year alone, Barber's scooped a total of two trophies, 11 Gold awards, 10 Silvers and 11 Bronzes at the International Cheese Awards, World Cheese Awards, Global Cheese Awards and South West Cheese Awards.



> "Barber's are committed to taking care of the land and the animals, and know that this ensures the very finest cheese. Their grass-fed diet makes all the difference to the flavours and quality of the cheese"





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