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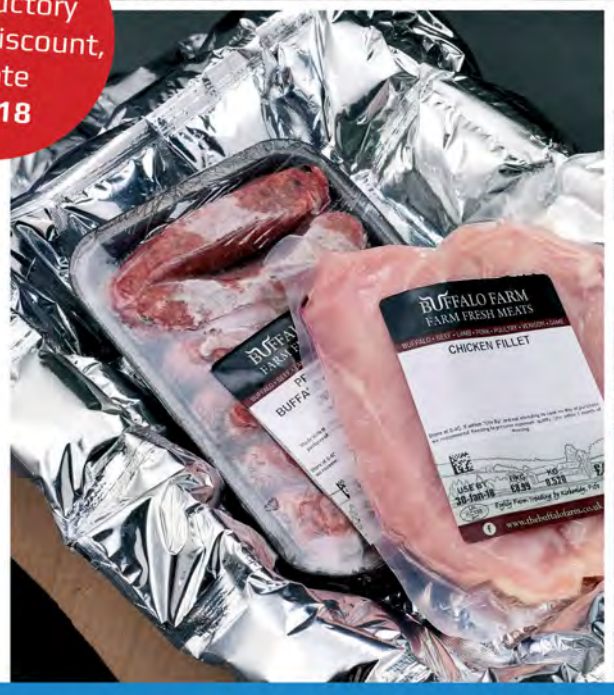
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FOOD



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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the February/March issue of Speciality Food.

As the editor of a food magazine, I know how easy it can be for the day-to-day paperwork and other responsibilities to overshadow the reason you entered this business: a love of food. It can be hard when you've been staring at a screen for eight hours straight to feel inspired, and I'm sure even more so if you've been run ragged by a string of difficult customers, staffing issues and toppling displays. It's all too easy for the stress of your job to cast shade on this simple enjoyment, but don't let it win. This may sound easier said than done, but don't overcomplicate it – all you need to do is think like a customer. Go out for a lovely meal, read a foodie magazine or cookbook, and get in the kitchen. If you have a bit more time to spare, check out one of the food shows or markets happening near you. You may well find that just a brief sojourn out of a professional mindset is all that was needed to get you approaching your business with a fresh pair of eyes.

I'm fortunate that my job allows for out-of-office trips, and as I write this letter I'm feeling refreshed and eager to get going – the past seven days have seen me travel to enter the world of one of the UK's most renowned distributors, check out the latest and greatest foods and homewares at Top Drawer, and visit a snowy Scotland's Speciality Food Show. Yes, I may have come back to hundreds of emails sitting in my inbox, but it was all worth it to meet innovative producers face-to-face and taste some exciting new flavours – one of my favourite parts of this job.

Another is the opportunity to bask in the passion and expertise of some of the food industry's most exciting names, and in this issue we speak to a great number of them: Jason Atherton, Michelin-starred chef with restaurants around the world (p. 10); Bronwen Percival of Neal's Yard Dairy, buyer and passionate advocate of real cheese (p.13); and a number of new and established businesses championing the sustainability cause (p. 18) to list just a few.

We also meet three business making big investments in 2018 (p. 16), find out more about food fraud and how we can tackle it (p. 30), and travel to Yorkshire to discover today's need-to-know products and their makers (p. 26).

As ever, get in contact with any comments or suggestions – we're in this together.

Holly

holly.shackleton@aceville.co.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

DOMESTIC CUSTOMERS KEY TO FORTNUM'S FESTIVE SALES

Strong sales growth across every channel, fuelled by a significant rise in domestic custom at its flagship store, has propelled Fortnum & Mason to a record trading performance over the Christmas period.

In the five-week period ending 31st December, Fortnum's like-for-like sales were up 13 per cent. In the month of December, 77 per cent of all sales in Piccadilly were from domestic customers. Ewan Venters, CEO of Fortnum & Mason said, "This tells us that the high quality of customer experience we deliver in-store, and for which Fortnum's is justly famous, is a big attraction for our customers, and is of course a reason to shop with us all year round."

ALIMENTARIA READYING BIGGEST EDITION IN YEARS

The international food, drinks and foodservice exhibition Alimentaria will have brand new spaces and content, making gastronomy its main differentiating factor this year.

The event, held at the Gran Via Fira Barcelona venue in Spain from April 16th until 19th, will see 4,500 exhibitors showcase their products, 27% of whom will be coming from outside Spain.

J. Antonio Valls, managing director of Alimentaria said, "The show is all about constant innovation, with the aim of adapting to the market and showcasing growing sectors that are innovative and offer added value."





The Great Sustainability Drive: is the fine food industry doing enough?

Scenes from BBC's Blue Planet 2 detailing how overfishing, plastic pollution and climate change are all damaging ocean habitats has caused the general public and politicians to address the formidable issue of waste.

The 'Attenborough Effect', and the subsequent public outcry, has prompted the government to announce a plethora of plastic-reducing and ecologically-minded messages, key among them is that the 5p carrier bag charge has been extended to smaller retailers with fewer than 250 employees.

In her 25-year environment plan, Theresa May has vowed to eliminate all plastic waste within that timeframe, with proposed polices including plastic-free aisles in supermarkets and a tax on takeaway containers.

The plan has influenced multiples to take a hard-line stance on plastic, with Iceland stating that within five years it will stop using plastic for its own-label products, and Waitrose pledging to not sell any food in black plastic packaging by 2019.

Furthermore, the EU has instructed national governments to provide greater access to drinking fountains and to encourage restaurants to offer free tap water.

Off the back of the ongoing drive to eliminate plastics, we speak to three key members of the fine food industry to find out their stance on the war on waste:



Paul Hargreaves, chief executive of Cotswold Fayre: It constantly amazes me how many shops complain about having too many suppliers and few shops actually do something about it. With ambient products, it's environmentally unfriendly to buy from 15 suppliers or so, whereas an alternative is for businesses to source their products from us and limit that carbon footprint. With chilled, it's that plus some, because when you buy direct from chilled suppliers the items typically come in polystyrene boxes, which can't be recycled.

The reason we got into chilled in the first place is because a farm shop we visited needed to hire an extra skip for their excess polystyrene. Luckily, suppliers are quite on-message in terms of packaging – a lot of them use recycled cardboard. Retailers are slowly getting the message, but there's still a way to go.

The waste concern is going to be an increasingly important message, particularly for farm shops, which are meant to be environmentally friendly. When shops aren't consolidating, it seems like it's purely down to history. Shops that have just started are going to perhaps be a bit more strategic, so they're generally really pleased to discover businesses like us.



Clare McDermott, business development director at The Soil Association: Independent retailers have been at the forefront of the movement towards reusable totes and shopper bags, and have an opportunity to lead the way when it comes to waste. The plastic bag levy has proved very successful and it makes sense to extend it to include other retailers.

Packaging is a complicated issue, there are no simple solutions and it will take a while to get it right. The Soil Association is working hard to come up with the best solutions, and sharing best practice and practical information on better alternatives to plastic and other environmentally-friendly packaging formats can lead to rapid change across the industry. We have also convened a specialist working group of leading packaging industry experts. They help advise us on these important issues and ensure we stay up to date with the latest innovations in recyclable and biodegradable materials so we can let our licensees know when better alternatives become available.

Since we launched the world's first packaging standards for organic products over 10 years ago, we have kept a close eye out for compostable plastics which do not cause harm to human health or the environment, for example we banned the use of PVC, GM materials and phthalates for these reasons. These standards not only ban these substances but also encourage all organic companies certified by us to use the least amount of packaging possible and to use recycled or recyclable materials.



Henry Amar, non-executive chairman of R.H. Amar: From a retailer's point of view, if you had to draw from different producers, there'd be on vans on the road day in, day out delivering two or three cases of product and it would be extremely environmentally unfriendly. We source from 25 different countries, we sell 1,200 products, and we are able to consolidate in a way that would be very difficult for retailers to achieve. Our business model is that we supply via the wholesale trade, so we bring in the products from different countries and have product manufactured in the UK, and it all comes to one central warehouse in High Wycombe from which we distribute to the wholesalers so it's environmentally friendly and commercially sensible – one vehicle turns up with everything the business needs. One order; one delivery – we think that's exceptionally important.

Within our company we have what we call our Green Committee, which looks at environmental issues and tries to analyse what we can do to improve things. We've stopped people from using plastic water bottles, and had water dispensers installed in our buildings. That sort of thing is a very small contribution, but it has the effect of getting people thinking about the issue.





JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES

"How was Christmas 2017 trading?"

It is of course very easy to distort trading forecasts and results with personal opinions, and Christmas trading pronouncements should always be taken with a pinch of salt. However, on the basis that this has never held us back in the past, here goes for Christmas 2017.

Our own forecast prior to last Christmas, and one that was incidentally shared by several colleagues in the trade, was that 2017 was not going to be a vintage Christmas. Brexit, world tensions, price increases, local building works, the fact that none of us are getting any younger and increased local competition were the main factors for our anxiety. Yet, fortuitously, we had our best ever 24 pre-Christmas days, climbing 1.9% from the peak of last year. Indeed for the 13 weeks of the December quarter we were up 2.9%. I am still not too sure how this happened considering the background noise of negativity on the high street. What it actually means, bearing in mind the inflation rate in food is currently running at around 4%, is that it may not, in fact, be much to write home about.

The main area of improvement for us occurred online, with a threefold increase year on year and hampers and gifts showing a 16% increase – which is pleasing considering in recent times this has been a weaker area for us. Continuing the positive theme, fruit and veg was up 13%, delicatessen up 11% and wines up 9%. Our weakest area was revenue from the outdoor food market which was down due to a reduction in size caused by the aforementioned local building works.

Since 1995, when I started keeping annual records in a place where I can actually find them, the inflation rate in food has averaged around 2.54% annually. Since that time our Christmas sales have in fact been up annually by about 3.77%. Which serves as a reminder, if we needed one, of the ever-vital importance of Christmas trading for independent food shops.

In terms of best-selling lines, reassuringly, the usual suspects came to the fore. Hams, wines, smoked salmon and cheese all played their part. Chocolate Olivers still show signs of rude health as do elvas plums, stollen, marrons glaces and crystallized ginger. Turkish delight wobbled as did boxed chocolates. Our own individual mince pies went well but Christmas puddings need a makeover fast. Panettone is becoming the new Christmas pudding, perhaps? We now sell over 25 different types! My two favourite products of the season were firstly our own-label Chelsea Flower Gin which kept on selling throughout the year, and secondly Baghi's various delicious Panettone-style concoctions in jars. .

Another great worry of Christmas trading is how much stock never makes it into a customer's basket. Christmas crackers, puddings, crystallized ginger, mincemeat and brandy butter lose a lot of dignity when reduced to clear on December 27th. However, thankfully there were no particular nightmares in this area either. We sold out of most things. As one member of staff put it "Elvas have left the building". All in all, Christmas 17 was not too bad.

As for 2018, it's time for a few new ideas and a mini upgrade around the shop – more of that later.

Immersive workshop aims to future-proof farm retail

Entrepreneurial farmers have the chance to meet their peers and discuss the future for farm retail with specialist consultants at a two-day workshop on 5th and 6th March.

Named The Gathering, the event will be co-hosted by Australian retail guru John Stanley and farm diversification expert Michael Mack of Savills. The Gathering will be held in Norwich and is set to examine the challenges facing the sector from influences ranging from innovative new players in the sector to the effect of Brexit. It will also feature guest speakers, including Rob Ward of The Grocery Accelerator.

Places are limited to just 20 delegates and it is expected that the event will attract participants from Ireland, Canada and the USA, as well as the UK.

Michael Mack said, "This is a challenging time for farm retail businesses but it's also a springboard for opportunity. Marketing and merchandising strategies that have worked well in the past will not necessarily succeed in the future and it's vital to adapt or risk being left behind.

"The Gathering is aimed at owners and managers who are passionate about what they do. The scale and nature of the delegates' enterprises are less important, their eagerness to learn and drive their businesses forward is far more important. We will be pushing them to explore how their plans are going to be affected by change and how they can harness it to have a positive impact."

The two-day workshop will be held at Savills' Norwich office at Hardwick House, NR1 3FS. The cost is £950+VAT, which covers one night's accommodation at a Norwich hotel, all meals and the workshop sessions. A £100 discount is available to FARMA members and Savills clients.

> "This is a challenging time for farm retail businesses but it's also a springboard for opportunity"

Fairfields Farm announces acquisition of Ten Acre

Essex-based crisps company Fairfields Farm will now produce Ten Acre's range with the brand hoping that the sale will build upon the success Ten Acre has established at home and abroad.

Ten Acre entered the snacking market in 2015 with its 'Free From Plus' crisps and popcorn. Each packet is gluten, dairy, GMO and MSG-free, as well as Vegan Society and Vegetarian Society-approved.

Tony Goodman, co-founder of Ten Acre said, "We have a synergy with Fairfields Farm; both believing in great taste and premium quality. Export is to be a focus at Fairfields - this is great for Ten Acre, as we recently received the award for Export Champion from the Department for International Trade. Our joint attributes and parallel thinking will push both brands forward to become a force to be reckoned with in the snacking sector."

Fairfields Farm has been farming potatoes in East Anglia for three generations. The potatoes are hand-cooked on the farm to ensure premium products. Robert Strathern, founder of Fairfields Farm said, "This is an exciting step for us. Ten Acre has the same values as Fairfields, so we felt they were a good fit. Plus, their experience and rapid growth in export, opens up opportunities for us. Joining forces means taking the best attributes of both brands and growing the Ten Acre and Fairfields brand together, for continued success."







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CHARLES CAMPION

"Happy New Year?"

It's the optimism that impresses. Anyone opening a restaurant must have a thick hide and determination a-plenty. Every year hopeful restaurateurs remodel their dream restaurant sites and then watch their life savings gurgle down the plug hole as the public gives its verdict. But a small proportion of these new restaurants will catch the public's fancy and prosper. For anyone interested in all things food and drink, studying the restaurant market can help reveal the future, and in the next four months there are a host of restaurant openings planned. This is where those extreme food trends first see the light of day. Here are just a few of the hopefuls trying their luck and opening soon. Which ones will make it? We have the rest of 2018 to find out.

Cora Pearl in Covent Garden is a solo venture from Tom Mullion who had such success with Kitty Fisher. The Good Egg deli will also be opening in Covent Garden with dishes inspired by the cuisine of Montreal and Israeli street food. Kudu will be bringing South African inspired dishes to Peckham with locally foraged ingredients. At Hicce (which means current in Latin), Pip Lacey, a protégé of Angela Hartnett, will be cooking over a wood fire and making much of traditional marinating, curing and pickling. Atticus – Soul food in North London from Iqbal Wahhab (he set up both the Cinnamon Club and Roast in Borough Market). Daddy Bao comes to Peckham – Taiwanese food, buns, "smacked cucumber" anybody? L'Ami Malo Crepes and galettes from Northern France coming to Spitalfields. There's to be a vegan mac 'n' cheese and quinoa taco salad. Farm Girl Chelsea Aussie food and health-conscious dishes. The Royal Oak at Whatcote, here 80% of the meat served comes from the wild... "pigeon biltong" anyone? Ekte Nordic Kitchen all-day Nordic cuisine has new home in the City. Ruya Middle Eastern fine dining is coming to Victoria. Anatolyan cuisine. Avobar Has Covent Garden been waiting for this all avocado restaurant? Brat Tomos Parry (ex Kitty Fisher's) opens in Shoreditch and names his venture after the Basque dialect name for turbot. Cooking on fire, with dishes from Welsh and Basque cuisines. Temakinho at Tower Bridge will be the second of these Japanese/Brazil fusion restaurants.

It's hard to believe but this short list only scratches the surface of the openings this spring and shows off the astonishing vibrancy of the UK restaurant scene. As for spotting cuisines that will end up being the "next big thing in the foodie world" you get to choose from: Israeli Street Food; South African meats; Soul Food; Bao Buns; Jamaican specialties; Crepes; Vegan; Aussie Cuisine; Wild Meat; Foraged food; Nordic Cuisine; Anatolyan Cuisine; Avocados; Welsh Cuisine; Basque Cuisine; Japanese/ Brazilian fusion. Imagine the stresses and strains of opening a restaurant – the decisions to be made. Then consider some of the stranger options above, because a proportion of them will succeed despite many of them looking very unlikely. Who knows, hidden in the long list of hopeful restaurant openings may be the one concept that tickles the public's tummy? And hidden in that success may be the food trend that we would all like to spot.

OPINION: What locational factors drive independent businesses to prosper?

While the number of independent businesses opening up over the UK is growing, experts are stating that high business rates and rising rent are meaning that burgeoning business owners are being selective when it comes to the area they wish to set up shop.

The number of independent shops opening in Britain's top 500 town centres reached 14,621 in 2016, which was higher than the number that closed at 14,462, resulting in a net increase of 159 shops.

This is 36 per cent higher than a net increase of 117 retailers in 2015, according to research by the Local Data Company and British Independent Retailers Association.

While this data may allude to the fact that the UK remains a nation of shopkeepers, affluent areas like Glastonbury (which had the highest percentage of independent shops at 85.6 per cent), are perhaps not representative of typical high streets.

London experienced the biggest decline, with a net drop of 154 independent shops, with rising rent and rates pointed out as factors behind the decrease.

Edward Berry, an independent food retail consultant at The Flying Fork and former managing director of The Ludlow Food Centre believes that there are arguments for opening a brick-and-mortar store in both traditional and run-of-the-mill high street locations. He said, "Most budding food retailers embarking on this would take what is probably the easiest and less challenging option, to be the only deli on the high street. No competition, no worries.

"Clusters of similar small shops can, and do generate footfall. However, with food, although we certainly see locations with a selection of indie food shops – and like-minded shoppers – it's really the differences that set each one apart."

Although, affluent areas such as Southwold that boast clusters of independent shops are often affected by high business rates and rent. Edward continues, "Rent may prove to be a challenge, as an area with a known success and sought-after demographics will come at a premium."

Leigh Sparks, deputy principal and professor of retail studies of University of Stirling said it all relies on how independent shops work in unison. He said, "If you get sufficient independents together in a place and they market themselves together – which are two big ifs – then certain groups will react to that very positively. It's seen as a point of difference and distinctiveness; consumers will engage with those independent businesses as a group."

THE RISE AND FALL OF INDIES IN 2017



Independent shops saw an increase of **+762** in the first half of **2017** versus **+4** in H1 2016



The North West showed the greatest increase of indie stores at **+230** units in H1 2017, versus **+14** units in H1 2016



Sparkhill in Birmingham has the highest percentage of indies at **95%**



Telford in Shropshire has the lowest percentage of indies at only **15.5%**, against a GB average of **65%**

*** Data courtesy of the Local Data Company and the British Independent Retailers Association**



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"The best action is to take a calm, measured approach"



MARK KACARY, NORFOLK DELI: "IF IT BECOMES CLEAR THERE'S A VENDETTA, THERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO"

Although User Generated Content (UGC) websites like TripAdvisor can be great tools for publicity, shop owners are being advised to not jump the gun when it comes to reacting to negative reviews.

In the past few months there have been some much-publicised examples of business owners replying to aspersions cast by what many deem 'amateur critics'.

Gary Usher, owner of the acclaimed Sticky Walnut restaurant in the Wirral, recently rebuked a diner's "lack of grace and good manners" after they left a negative review on TripAdvisor.

A recent Vice article in which a reporter created a TripAdvisor page for a non-existent restaurant and paid friends to write positive reviews saw the pseudo-eatery reach number one in TripAdvisor's London listings, shedding some light on how easily the website's ranking system can be manipulated and how reviews are perhaps not properly moderated.

If a business has received a negative review, Becky Storey, a digital PR specialist at Vertical Leap, recommends stepping back and assessing the situation before responding. She said, "Every review needs to be treated on a case-by-case basis. If this means sending out a holding message while you investigate, do so. It shows that, as a company, you're reactive to reviews and customer feedback, both positive and negative."

Becky suggests that it is of utmost importance to remain calm about the situation and refrain from a knee-jerk reaction. She said, "Never respond in anger! It can be tempting to fight fire with fire, especially when it feels like you're under attack, but the best action is to take a calm, measured approach to any negative review."

Mark Kacary, owner of Norfolk Deli, believes that most business owners have a love-hate relationship with the reviewing website. He said, "What often irritates businesses is when you remember the individual who writes a bad review and that they had a chance to say something at the time when something could be done to resolve whatever issue they may had. Instead, they rush off home and hide behind an identity to carry out a character assassination for no other reason than vengeance."

For all the criticism of TripAdvisor rules and regulations, Kacary emphasises that the website offers businesses the chance to flag suspicious reviews whereas other UGC sites may not. He continues, "If it becomes clear that there is a vendetta and a series of reviews are all offensive and clearly untrue, there is an email address you provide evidence to that there are untruths being told and TripAdvisor will remove the reviews. Google doesn't."

If a business owner feels that their premises is coming under undue attack, Becky believes that due diligence needs to be applied when it comes time to issue a response. She said, "Check out previous reviews, and a quick Google search could shed some light on the person's review history. If you suspect that they might just be trying their luck at a discount or some free stuff, acknowledge their review and deal with it as you would any other, but hold the goodwill gestures."



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SORAYA GADELRAB OF FDIN

"Future Food Trends"

The food and drink industry is always evolving, and the past few years have seen some exciting transformations. We waved goodbye to 'skinny' and 'low fat' ideals and welcomed in a healthier interest in food and drink that benefits our body. Consumers are becoming increasingly motivated to eat foods that can improve their physical and mental wellbeing. Whether it's energy-boosting ingredients or fermented drinks that can rebalance gut bacteria, consumers are willing to try it.

Consumer palates are becoming more sophisticated as we get a better understanding of the health benefits of certain foods. Take Kombucha or Kimchi, who would have thought that fermented foods would become mainstream in the UK diet? Known by the Chinese as the 'immortal health elixir', Kombucha is used to improve digestion, stimulate the immune system, aid weight loss and prevent arthritis. This new information is encouraging consumers to invest in different products and moving forward, we can expect to see this curiosity grow.

These new consumer priorities could be attributed to a rise in influential people sharing a message online. We are seeing more Chefs, Bloggers and YouTubers shedding light on important topics such as gut health, so there's no surprise it's on everyone's mind. Amongst these influencers are food doctors, Dr Hazel Wallace and Dr Rupy Aujla, who use social media as a powerful platform to share a message about using food for medicine. Dr Tim Spector is also taking advantage of large audiences online to educate consumers and brands about the Microbiome. The Microbiome includes bacteria, fungi, parasites, and viruses and in a healthy person, coexists peacefully, with the largest numbers found in the small and large intestines but also throughout the body. The microbiome is labelled a supporting organ because it plays so many key roles in promoting the smooth operation of the human body.

We will see more plant-based ingredients in supermarkets this year as we learn of their remarkable health benefits. Moringa, native to India, is one of the most nutritious plants in the world. It is rich in antioxidants and is an anti-inflammatory that supports brain health and protects the liver. Similarly, fibres like Inulin will gradually start to appear on our radars. Not to be confused with insulin, inulin is a plant fibre which effectively boosts digestion. With a number of excellent benefits such as boosting heart health and increasing calcium absorption, this natural sweetener will do wonders in the food space.

We are also seeing an impressive movement in food and drink as waste becomes a priority. People are uniting on Twitter with hashtags such as #PassOnPlastic and household food names are making changes to their business models to fight waste. In 2018, we will see new ways to reduce waste which will prevent producers from throwing away food classed as 'rubbish' during production. We will see more supermarkets selling food past its sell-by and restaurants thriving from their 'waste' menus. More coffee shops will offer discounts when bringing a reusable cup and Evian has vowed to become a 100% circular brand by 2025. Whether it's sincere or inspired by PR, there is an impressive movement taking over the industry.

Interest and orders aplenty at Scotland's Speciality Food Show

The warmth of the Scottish food and drink industry drove away the bad weather this week as orders flowed and confidence abounded at Scotland's Speciality Food Show.

Praise was given to the high quality of products and exhibitors that made up Scotland's Speciality Food Show, which was held in Glasgow from 21st-23rd January.

The sheer breadth of products and the high quality of the ingredients, packaging and presentation attracted owners and buyers of farm shops, delis, restaurants, supermarkets, tourist shops and hotels from all over the UK.

From products inspired by foreign flavours to the rise of Scottish craft gins the categories covered a broad spectrum of products in both retail and foodservice.

The show highlights were particularly well received. Best Product Awards were judged at the opening of the show with the judges praising the innovation and strength of the entries.

Jamie Landale, owner of The Crieff Food Company and one of the judges, said, "We were really impressed with the quality and variety of food and drink products on offer at the show. Five or 10 years ago the principal products on offer would have been traditional Scottish ones such as oatcakes, shortbread and whisky. Today the choice is vast from Scottish biltong to raw vegan desserts and so much is well produced, well presented and tastes delicious. Well done to all those who go that extra mile to produce high quality food that consumers now expect."

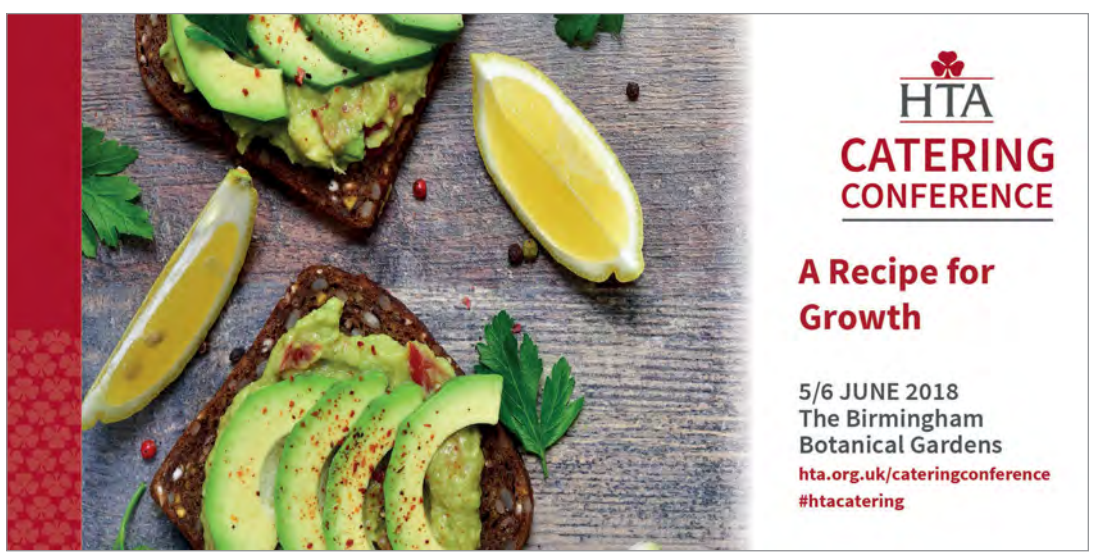
Mark Saunders, show director said, "There is an air of optimism in the independent retail market in Scotland – it was plain to see at Scotland's Speciality Food Show. Despite a slightly lower footfall caused by the bad weather, this hasn't stopped the orders and leads flowing and most exhibitors and visitors left the show feeling buoyant about the year ahead. Indications show that outlets catering for tourists should continue to flourish as Scotland remains a very popular place to visit.

> "There is an air of optimism in the independent retail market in Scotland"



BHS in Oxford Street is set to reopen as the UK's biggest food hall, according to Market Halls, a group of property investors and restaurateurs. The company is set to open five other locations elsewhere in London this year, and numerous regional launches are expected to be announced in 2018. Andy Pratt, CEO of Market Halls, states that the company's intention is to set up food halls in otherwise unused premises. "Food halls are nothing new of course," he says, "but we want to create permanent dining hubs that work for the community, something we haven't seen yet in the UK."





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Now you've got the hang of free-from and plant-based, it could be high time you explore the sports nutrition sector. It's not all about protein shakes and luminous-coloured energy drinks any more

If your customers have been increasingly reaching for the vegan banana chips and gluten-free coconut bites, it might be worth your while looking into healthier, fitness-focused products, too. Where purchasing a protein shake or energy gel would have been a daunting prospect for casual fitness fans in the past, in modern times many mainstream products boast similar ingredients and serve the same – or similar – purposes as gym-focused food and drink items. While protein is definitely the buzzword of the sector – and we're seeing it proliferating the speciality food industry, too – it's not simply about the sheer volume health fitness fans can consume any more, as healthy-minded consumers seek out superfood-laden snack bars and energy balls.

While you would have been hard-pressed to discover a new product with packaging that wasn't proudly emblazoned with gluten-free a couple of years ago, it appears that a 'high in protein' logo warrants just as much prominence in 2018. It's easy to see why, with high protein boasting serious pedigree by attracting more lifestyle users and followers of the popular paleo diet, rather than gym bunnies exclusively. In fact, according to the Mintel's Global New Products Database, the number of food and drink products launched in the UK with a high-protein claim rose by 97% between 2014 and 2015, and 498% between 2010 and 2015.

Consumers are looking beyond just the protein tag, too, with collagen increasingly becoming a supplement that's in high demand. Collagen is a kind of protein that our body naturally produces and is found in the connective tissues of our bodies, which gives our skin support and elasticity while keeping it flexible and firm. The problem is that when we age, our body typically produces less collagen, which is driving the desire for many to seek out collagen-boosting products. Popular products on the market now are collagen shots, as well as a gin that contains collagen that has been hitting the headlines.

New customer profiles

Research from Mintel shows that as many as one in four Brits (24%) have consumed a sports nutrition product in the past three months, rising to 42% of men aged 16 to 24. One reason why sports nutrition-focused products have become increasingly more commonplace is that they've dovetailed neatly with the rise in veganism and plant-based diets. The phenomenal rise of the vegan diet – championed by top name sportspeople like boxer David Haye, tennis superstars Venus and Serena Williams and footballer Jermain Defoe – has no doubt influenced consumers' outlooks, with it seen as not just an ethical choice, but an aspirational and healthier lifestyle to follow, too. Nowadays there's an abundance of plant-based protein products available to vegans as an alternative to the traditional whey-centric items.

"Sports nutrition continues to enjoy growth thanks to it having attracted a more diverse user group," believes Anita Winther, research analyst at Mintel. "However, the category is facing intensifying competition from mainstream foods embracing a high-protein proposition. Demand for sports nutrition products made with all-natural ingredients and those without sugar highlight areas of focus for brands going forward."

Acti-Snack, a sporting nutrition brand, has just announced its best year to date since launching back in 2015, with a 34.4% growth in value year-on-year and a 208% growth in the past two years. Andrea Cahill, marketing manager at Acti-Snack puts the company's upwards trajectory down to a shift in consumer expectation when it comes to food products. "As consumers become more discerning in terms of what they're putting in their bodies, clear and transparent labelling is more important than ever," she says.

In its 2018 trends round-up, Whole Foods Market endorses the use of super powders and stresses the point that protein powders have made the transition from the gym locker room to the NutriBullet in the kitchen. "Smoothie fans are also raising a glass to powders like spirulina, kale, herbs and roots for an oh-so-green vibrancy that needs no Instagram filter," states the report. "Even protein powders have evolved beyond bodybuilders to pack in new nutrients like skin and hair-enhancing collagen."

WHAT TO STOCK

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THE INTERVIEW: JASON ATHERTON

A worldwide restaurant empire hasn't distanced the Michelin-starred chef from his British roots

I've been cooking for 31 years. I started as a chef at the age of 16, and quickly learned that if I wanted to be a great chef I had to be in London, so I left my home of Skegness to live in a youth hostel in Earls Court. I got a job at a top restaurant, quickly progressed through the brigade and went on to work with Pierre Koffman and Marco Pierre White. I then worked in France for a while then met Gordon Rhodes, who I worked with for 12 years, then set up a business with my wife – we now have 17 restaurants around the world and four Michelin stars.

Freedom is one of the most exciting elements of my job. I get to go to work and choose what produce I want to cook with, to produce any dishes I like and get paid for it... It's a pretty cool existence! One of my greatest achievements is having four Michelin stars to my name and five AA Rosettes. My business allows me to look after my family and have have the luxury of cooking every day.

When you get to travel, one of the great ways to experience a new culture is to taste the food. When I first travelled to Japan, around eight years ago, I was completely blown away by the experience. We were bowled over by the culture and how great the food was. My wife is from the Philippines, and the first time I went we ate a lot of street food – it was great to get to know the food my wife was brought up on.

Even though it's always been there to an extent, one of the most exciting things about the British food industry today is that people are really getting into where their food came from. If you think about it, we had a great culinary heritage hundreds of years ago, then went through the World Wars and lost our way in food. We were one of the worst offenders for horrendous food in the sixties and seventies; people always used to joke that if you were going out for a meal you'd better eat something at home before you went. We've moved passed this now; we went through a phase of everything being very fancy when you went out for dinner, but now you can have anything you want – from great value, delicious informal food to Michelin-starred and world-class cuisine. That's something I think we should all be very proud of as a country; we've come so far in just 20-30 years, and now there's so much awareness about what makes a great egg or a great piece of beef. In the past, an egg was an egg, and beef was beef. Chefs would cook with them and their customers would very much enjoy the dishes, but these days people can really tell the difference between standard food and well-produced food. It's a great thing, as it means that the industry and consumers are paying tribute to the great farmers and producers in this country. People understand the language of good food, so if a fish is 'line-caught' and beef is 'aged', people are willing to pay more for it. Eggs are a great example. The concept of free-range has really taken off – people understand the difference between battery and free-range, and the effect that the hen's food has on the flavour and texture of it. If the hen is fed well, the protein in the egg white will be perfectly formed and the yolk will have a lovely colour. People really care about that kind of thing now.

There's a great food renaissance happening in Britain at the moment. So many counties are renowned for their food – Cornwall for its fish and seafood, the Lake District for its meat, Lincolnshire for its potatoes thanks to the salt marsh, the Home Counties for their poultry. At this time of year we're getting wonderful apples and pears coming to the fore; a few years ago they were all one and the same, but today you walk into a shop and have a myriad of apples on sale, all with different characteristics.

In terms of where Britain's food sector is heading, I think there's going to be an increasing awareness and appreciation of great regional foods and their stories. We should be much more proud of our regional food – rather than slapping a British badge on a regional product, or listing something as Welsh, Scottish or Irish, we should make a point of its real origin. If you go to France, Spain or Italy, the food from the different regions is very different and they're proud of that. Whereas here, you say that a Cornish pasty is a British food, rather than Cornish.

During my travels I've discovered that the world has a great respect for food. My wife had humble beginnings in the Philippines, and her family would go to the market to pick up meat, fish and vegetables to produce a really wholesome meal. People in the UK use being time-poor as an excuse to eat badly, but in reality that shouldn't be a barrier. It's just so much better to cook fresh food, and that's something that third world countries have adopted so much better than Brits. When I travel I always make sure to immerse myself in the food culture – I go to restaurants, have a look around the markets, and that's so important. Fresh food is a really key part of people's lives around the world, and I think that should be the case in the UK, too.

Brits these days don't necessarily go into a foodie profession with an eye to opening their own Michelin-starred restaurants; they're often opening more casual places which speak to them, and these bring more depth into the industry. With this new generation of chefs sharing this passion for produce and desire to connect with their suppliers, I'm hopeful that the days of fruit and vegetables going to waste because they're not symmetrical are gone – chefs, consumers and retailers are all in this together, supporting the same cause. Long may this continue.

Jason Atherton is brand ambassador for Heritage Breeds, a business dedicated to high welfare and high quality free-range eggs.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

LESSONS LEARNED...

I still learn every day from other people who have worked within restaurants and kitchen; I've learned in particular that my way isn't always the best way. It's important to be humble and to listen to what people have to say, no matter how trivial you think it may be at first.

INSPIRATION...

I'm inspired by my wife and two children every day – they inspire me to do a good job and to make them proud of me. My teams across the world work so hard, and my duty to them keeps me going too.

> "This is an extraordinary time to be involved in food. Chefs, consumers and retailers are all in this together – long may that continue"

MAKING IT WORK

When I choose ingredients, I don't worry too much about cost – although I have to be able to sell it to the customer at a reasonable price – I'm more concerned with whether it's the very best that's available. Can I make a fantastic meal out of it, and are my guests going to enjoy it? There's no compromise, there are no ifs, buts or maybes, that's just what I do. Whether I'm serving Michelin-starred food at Pollen Street Social or Japanese cuisine at Sosharu, it's always about incredible food. Even at Berners Tavern, where we sell a very reasonably-priced brunch menu which always packs the restaurant out, it's not a case of cutting costs on ingredients in order to make more money, it's about sourcing the very best eggs in the country. The best bacon. And the best joint of beef when we're serving our roasts on a Sunday.

In other countries, the worlds of foodservice and retail are very much combined, but in the UK we're only now starting to appreciate the value of bringing a restaurant chef and his passion about really great dishes into the product development process. The same is true of produce. I've never been as close to my producers as I have been during the past five years. In fact, in my latest book, *Pollen Street Social*, the first section is taken up by my favourite suppliers telling their story. I want people to read that book and enjoy the recipes, of course, but also to understand what went into producing the meat that's on their plate, where their fish has come from. It's the farmers and fisherman who are getting up in the early hours to look after their livestock and get on their fishing boat. It's they who are going out and line-catching the exact squid that I want. It's their story, and I wanted to give them a chance to tell it.

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Talk cheese

New retail perspectives from industry experts



BRONWEN PERCIVAL OF NEAL'S YARD DAIRY

"The rise of real cheese"

Slow Food's biennial cheese festival is the preeminent international event devoted to speciality cheese, bringing together more than 300,000 visitors and producers from 50 countries. At last September's gathering, change was in the air: for the first time in the festival's 20-year history, only raw-milk cheeses were on display. More radical still, much of the programmed content focused on themes of biodiversity and naturalness, with panel discussions on making cheeses without commercial inoculants and a so-called Biodiversity House featuring a 'natural aperitif' that paired cheese made with exclusively native microbes with natural wines made without selected yeasts or sulphites. As the conference concluded, Piero Sardo, president of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, suggested that the next edition of the conference should take things one step further, and feature only cheeses made without commercial cultures. As with natural wine—with its vibrant community of restaurants, wine bars, and retailers, and a growing millennial consumer base—a new conversation about raw materials and minimal intervention is afoot within the cheese industry.

In *Reinventing the Wheel: Milk, Microbes and the Fight for Real Cheese* (Bloomsbury, 2017), Francis Percival and I explore this emerging frontier for speciality cheese. Not so long ago, monikers such as 'handmade' and 'traditional' could be applied to any cheese without fear of challenge. But today, more consumers are looking for cheese that takes its character from raw materials, not flavours of process. At the most basic level, this means cheeses made without additives, whether familiar-and-obvious fruits and spices, or more insidious adjunct cultures such as Lactobacillus helveticus, which adds an easily-identifiable confected sweetness.

It's easy to conflate this style of cheese with raw-milk cheese. But as we venture further, the conversation becomes one of farming milk specifically for cheese. Cheese is a manifestation of farming on three levels: fields, ruminants, and microbes. Raw milk that comes from animals fed a high-concentrate diet, and which has been stripped of its microbial biodiversity through insensitive handling, lacks the potential to make unique and flavoursome cheese. Conversely, when raw milk is produced within an interesting farming system, sensitively-made cheese allows us as consumers to taste the quality of the inputs first-hand.

The rhetorical power of this style of cheesemaking, for the fans at Slow Food and elsewhere, is that it can't be mimicked at a large scale: it is this uniqueness that comes from biodiversity that is the hallmark of this style of cheese. Every good farm's cheese tastes different. And—just as with natural wine—producers and consumers are learning to recognise and appreciate the characteristic tells that differentiate this style of product.

Neil Robinson and Dominique Lize-Beaulieu are planning production of a new Double Gloucester cheese in Chedworth, Gloucestershire. Says Dominique, "We are working to create a farm-expressive cheese. And to that end, we work with Rob [the herd manager] to celebrate the flora, microflora and farming decisions of the farm by allowing the milk to express itself with minimal interventions and slow makes. We are far more excited about harnessing the microbes inherent in the milk than using a packet of starter culture produced in a lab miles away from the farm. Why would we want our cheese to taste like those made in a factory?"

As this conversation inevitably trickles down to the mainstream, the traditional commodity structures that have underpinned the dairy industry will face their biggest challenge yet. But for readers of this magazine—Britain's top food retailers—this great sorting also presents an opportunity. Speciality food retail is frequently tarred with the accusation of disengagement from the wider social good, in other words, selling 'fancy food to fancy people'. Retailers who champion cheeses that embody the taste of sustainability and biodiversity, and who showcase the products of small farmers rather than commodity processors, project a very different identity. Why not get in front of a rising trend, promote the flavours of social and environmental responsibility, and provide your customers with more remarkable and flavoursome cheese?

> "Not so long ago, monikers such as 'handmade' and 'traditional' could be applied to any cheese without fear of challenge"



JASON FISHER OF ROWCLIFFE

"How to pair charcuterie and cheese"

When it comes to pairing charcuterie meats and cheese, there's lots of opportunity to explore and customize.

With the wide array of artisanal cheeses and charcuterie available in the UK, the pairings are never-ending, and you only need to experiment and use some creativity. Charcuterie and cheese pairings not only add a sense of adventure on the board – but also offers a valuable chance to cross sell cheeses and must have deli product accessories. It's time to push the deli board boundaries and release a hunger for 'show stopping' boards – with each product knowing what role to play.

For those customers who prefer a "starter guide", the team at Rowcliffe have some advice and suggestions.

Three key points to have in mind before creating a cheese and charcuterie board:

Acidity: It's important that the acidity has been accounted for, otherwise there won't be any cut through for the fat, protein and salt that can be found in either the charcuterie or the cheese. Ideally, there needs to be a product that provides a refreshing tartness, a clean sharpness and a citrus contribution. Either the cheese and meat can be rich and oily – so acidity plays an important part to balance the overall flavours.

Texture: It matters, think about offering an interesting textural experience. A soft cheese with equally soft sliced meats will not provide the differentiation and the sensorial pleasure, and may leave a rather underwhelming and unforgettable 'mushy' memory.

Paired flavours: Pair the cheeses and meats which draw out the partnering flavours and complement each other. Pairing works well when the products are sourced from the same region, one can fire up the other. Opposite flavours work well too e.g. acidity and sweetness, nuttiness and fruitiness etc. With cured meats, they fall into two distinct flavour profiles. The whole muscle group (made with whole muscle of the animal), like Prosciutto are typically dry-cured, salted, smoked or fermented in a humid environment – therefore they tend to be sweeter, nuttier and more 'umami'. The encased meats (use chopped or ground meat which can be fermented and 'encased') have more tang, notes of black pepper, truffle or ingredients that have been introduced. Be mindful of the differing flavours from the two groups.

It can be amazing to taste how cheese and charcuterie pairings can change or strengthen the characteristics of a product. Our last tip is to have fun and explore the differing pairing possibilities and you may surprise yourself with a delicious discovery!

ROWCLIFFE PAIRING FAVORITES:
The classic Parmigiano Reggiano and Parma Ham DOP – destined to be together from start to finish. The whey by product is fed to the hogs that provide the Parma Ham DOP and the cheese contributes the nuttiness, while the meat proudly delivers the savory lead. A great partnership!

- Baron Bigod (a Brie De Meaux style cheese) and Suffolk Fennel Salami (Suffolk Salami Co. makes award winning handmade salami and ham from pork reared on the family farm) – British charcuterie has recently become established and recognised for its quality.
- Wendolyn (a washed rind cheese in brandy cider from Somerset) and Suffolk Salami Sliced Smoked Ham
- Rowcliffe Exclusive Appenzeller® Extra (an artisanal Appenzeller washed in a secret herbal brine) and Suffolk Salami Sliced Rosemary Salami
- Cheddar Quickes Oak Smoked and Suffolk Salami Sliced Chorizo
- Westcombe Cheddar and Suffolk Salami Sliced Glazed Orange Marmalade Ham

Wensleydale Dairy Products appoints new chairman in ambitious drive for growth

The Wensleydale Creamery, the famous cheesemaker set in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, has appointed David Salkeld as its new chairman to help spearhead further growth for the brand.



With over 25 years of director-level food and dairy leadership experience, Salkeld joins from his role as chief executive at convenience food manufacturer Symingtons, where he led the turnaround of the business, driving acquisitions and leading a major brand development programme.

He was previously managing director of Northern Dairies and chief executive officer at Arla Foods, leading the team that turned around the company's performance in the UK.

David Hartley, managing director at The Wensleydale Creamery said, "We're delighted to welcome David to The Wensleydale Creamery. A demonstrated leader with a wealth of experience, David will be instrumental in our future as he helps us to develop strategic opportunities; bringing new thinking and guidance to assist in the development and delivery of our ambitious growth strategy.

"We also want to say a big thank you to Matthew Gribbin for all his hard work and support which has been key to our development over the last 10 years."

The Wensleydale Creamery is looking forward to a strong start to 2018, following a recent £5m investment in its new dairy and cheesemaking facilities.

Salkeld commented, "It's fantastic to join such a strong team at The Creamery and I'm delighted to come on board as chairman.

"It's no secret that the dairy industry is a really challenging one, and we will continue to work hand-in-hand with all partners to ensure that we are focused to deliver, and maximise, the wealth of opportunities that are available domestically and abroad."



Colston Bassett aims to stretch blue cheese demand beyond Christmas

Colston Bassett Dairy is implementing a marketing plan to support retailers with sales of Stilton and Shropshire Blue throughout the year.

Recognised as a festive cheeseboard stalwart, Colston Bassett is considering new ways to encourage repeat custom throughout the year.

Its latest wave of promotional activity follows on from the successful introduction of its Class of Cultures recipe booklet. This campaign saw the British blue cheeses incorporated into globally-inspired dishes, executed by six internationally-acclaimed chefs.

This year's campaign focus will be little closer to home, reflecting on seasonal produce and celebrating simple, quality cornerstones of British cuisine.

Billy Kevan, dairy manager at Colston Bassett said, "Sometimes going back to basics can deliver the best results. When you have top quality, multi award-winning cheese, you can serve it really simply and still have a memorable experience. We're working with an up and coming chef-cum-baker who will explore local, seasonal ingredients, to create a harvest supper for spring, summer, autumn and winter."

"Work was the only thing stopping me from pursuing cheesemaking; so I quit"

A one-day cheesemaking course at the School of Artisan Food, based on the Welbeck Estate, was the catalyst for Sophie Williamson's unconventional journey from IT security specialist to professional cheesemaker.

Sophie's business, Sheffield Cheesemasters, open its doors in autumn 2017, and now produces the first artisan cheese made in the city, Little Mester.

Sophie said, "It all started with a Christmas present from my partner. I've always loved cheese and he bought me a place on an introductory course at the School of Artisan Food, which got me excited about cheesemaking. There's so much complexity and so much you can learn. It kick-started the idea of reinventing myself as a cheesemaker; I felt it would be brilliant to do something I really loved."

A few weeks after her first visit to the school, Sophie had completed the Dairy Science and Food Business Start-Ups courses and handed in her notice at work.

While making her own cheese at home and establishing relationships with local suppliers, Sophie also co-ordinated the build of a make room, including three temperature-controlled maturing rooms, in the unit which is home to Sheffield Cheesemasters.

The School of Artisan Food has just launched a new Artisan Business Start-Up Certificate, with courses opening from April 2018. Based on the Welbeck Estate between Sheffield and Nottingham, the school's course has five modules looking at areas such as the operations, cash flow and finance. Each three-day module runs over a weekend and is led by Yvonne O'Donovan, who has guided numerous food business start-ups over the years.




IMAGE COURTESY OF THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

British cheeses receive royal seal of approval

Members of the royal family have enjoyed a cheese-heavy January, with Princess Anne paying the Cornish Cheese Co. a visit, and Prince Harry and fiancée Meghan Markle being gifted a Snowdonia Cheese Company wedding cake during a recent trip to Cardiff.

The Princess Royal took a trip to the home of Cornish Blue to celebrate its Cornish success story, which has seen the company grow substantially in recent years.

Princess Anne took a guided tour of the production facilities at Upton Cross, enjoyed a taste of Cornish Blue and unveiled a plaque to commemorate her visit.

Philip Stansfield, owner and founder of Cornish Cheese Co. said, "It was a great honour to have a visit from the Princess Royal. We are delighted to have been recognised in this way."

Meanwhile, during a Taste of Wales experience, the recently engaged Prince Harry and Meghan Markle were presented with a five-tiered wedding cake as a celebratory gift.

Each layer in the cake was comprised of a colourful wax-enrobed wheel of cheese, including Red Storm, Beechwood, Green Thunder and Black Bomber.

Richard Newton-Jones, commercial director of Snowdonia Cheese Company said, "It's an honour to gift the royal couple our distinctive cheeses and it was a fantastic opportunity to showcase the range alongside other great Welsh producers."

Retailers urged to keep apace with consumers' growing 'foodie' nous

The Academy of Cheese is recommending that specialist retail staff undertake dedicated cheese training, in order to meet consumers' increasingly high expectations.

As many food and drink trend predictions state, consumers' growing interest in provenance will continue to develop. Industry forecasters are seeing natural and sustainable food becoming an entry-level expectation for consumers. In response, producers will need to be open about their ingredients and processes.

As consumers expand their knowledge, professionals must keep apace. Through the Academy's Level One accreditation, delegates can improve their cheese understanding across nine areas including presentation, regulation, buying, distribution and tasting.

Tracey Colley, director of the Academy of Cheese said, "The Academy has been founded to promote cheese knowledge and provide career development so that the whole industry can thrive. As consumers demand more, retailers have to be able to up their levels of expertise."

JUSTIN TUNSTALL RETAIL CONSULTANT



"Board, not bored"

Almost all cheesemongers can assemble a cheese board in our sleep. Variety of flavour, texture, colour and milk type help create a fascinating representation of the diversity of cheesemaking. We pluck suggestions from our knowledge of our stock and its condition, creating an impressive finale to dinner parties, themed by almost any other criteria.

But what of the cheese on offer at local restaurants and pubs? Are you aware of what's on sale there, unless you're supplying them directly? From the outset of my business I made a decision not to supply hospitality outlets, save on a cash basis. I didn't want to lose margin, nor spend time chasing debt. On the two occasions where I did give credit (to 'celebrity' chefs), I regretted it – the back office accounting staff didn't live up to the smiling face of the restaurant, as seen on TV and in the press.

Nonetheless, I made a standing offer to local chefs: to come and taste what's available in-store and I'd happily point them towards one of the dairy wholesalers to supply it. In my experience, most hospitality suppliers relied on their drivers for contact with their accounts. They offer little help or guidance for chefs whose last comprehensive review of the variety of cheese may have been in the last century. For British cheese in particular, the years since the millennium have seen an explosion of innovation and creativity – and a tangible increase in both quality and consistent supply of artisan cheeses. How is a busy chef to keep on top of what's available when working a 60+ hour week? My only request to the chefs who visited me was that if diners asked about particular cheeses, waiting staff would be briefed to point them in my direction. Sometimes my business got a mention on the menu, with the cheeseboard branded as "Town Mill Cheesemonger's selection".

We helped replace some of the more formulaic cheeseboard offerings, and encouraged chefs to look for quality in every item they offered in their cheese selection, rather than a single premium 'star' (often a good blue), with makeweight generic Brie and Cheddar to keep the cost down. Most restaurants will work to 30% as ingredient cost, meaning that a £7.95 cheeseboard should cost no more than £2.40 or so to plate up. That's not a lot of quality cheese, but it can be done. I've given guidance on portioning awkwardly shaped cheeses and help stipulate serving sizes to ensure that a great cheese selection can be served on a budget that works for the chef.

Then there's those restaurants that already use a good, proactive wholesaler (of which there are a few) and already have an impressive cheese offering. Our favourite has a cheese menu of about a dozen cheeses – pricing steps up with the number of selections made. I always make a point of finding out what they have on their menu and give strong consideration to trying their selections in my chillers.

For cheesemongers, chefs can act as a valuable introduction to our wares. The simple act of persuading a pub to provide Traditional West Country Farmhouse Cheddar as the cornerstone of their Ploughman's Lunch can get a shopper to look further than the deli counter of their usual multiple supermarket.





TIME FOR CHANGE

Ellen Manning profiles three businesses taking the plunge in 2018

A new year is always a clean slate, bringing new challenges and new targets. But for some businesses, some years are bigger than others. Doom-mongers may warn that tough times are ahead for food and drink businesses as the knock-on effects of the UK's departure from the EU remain unknown. But for many independent producers, it's time to grow and 2018 is the year to take a leap.

"I'm doing this in achievable steps to make sure it will work"



One of those is Prices Spices, whose founder Michael Price says this is the year he takes his chilli business to the next level.

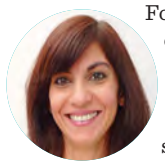
Prices Spices started as a hobby for Price, who had been growing chillies at home for a few years and got "the chilli bug". A surplus of chillies in 2013 saw him start making a few sauces and jams and taking them to a chilli festival. He sold out, making £500, and booked the next event straight away. It wasn't a one-off and Price continued, becoming a regular sight at food festivals across the country and scooping his first Great Taste Award. Buoyed by his success, he quit his job as a software developer at Aston Martin in 2015, taking redundancy and deciding to put everything into Prices Spices. The decision paid off. The business has gone from strength to strength, growing from five products to 22 and a turnover of just over £40,000, plus a clutch of awards including more Great Taste Awards, national chilli awards and a BBC Producers' Bursary.

Five years after he started, Price is about to take the biggest step his business has seen so far, moving from his kitchen at home in Leamington Spa to a site just outside Snitterfield near Stratford-upon-Avon, where he can grow on a whole new scale as well as operating a commercial kitchen. 'The Farm' is a former farm shop under redevelopment and is hoped to form part of Warwickshire's own Centre of Food Excellence. Price agreed to move in in February 2017 and is hoping to open at the site in June 2018. "Our previous grow was done in a 12x8' greenhouse at home and now we have a couple of polytunnels," he says, describing the labour of love that has seen him spend weeks clearing trees and brambles and re-covering rotten frames ready for his plants to take up residence. "We'll have all four up and running which will be a whopping 500 square meters or more, with a huge chilli grow that will wow the public for the opening."

Price's plans don't just mean more space to grow chillies and transform them into award-winning sauces, jams and spice mixes. He has big plans for a hydroponic section and shop as well as workshops and cooking classes. "As far as things for next year go, plans don't get much bigger," he says. "There's so many things I want to do but until I've got a commercial kitchen I can't. I can't grow." A commercial kitchen will not only allow Price to get his SALSA certification but will also give him scope to expand the operation further and employ staff – something he can't do when he's working out of his kitchen at home. "This move takes the operation from domestic to commercial basically. It's going from one man and a pan to looking at employing someone, maybe in 2019."

So why 2018? For Price it's the right time to take the leap. "I see so many people go in too deep too quick," he reflects. "It's about not jumping into something that I can't pay the bills for. This is me taking the next step without risking putting the business under. It's doing it in achievable steps to make sure it will work."

"We just wanted something that could really change lives"



For the founder of chocolate makers Harry Specters, 2018 isn't just about growing sales and making more money. It's about helping more people than ever. Harry Specters is a social enterprise dedicated to helping people with autism. Mona and Shaz Shah, whose son Ash has autism, started it as a way of creating employment for young people with autism, giving them confidence and hope to enter the world of work.



The company's hand-crafted chocolates have won 22 awards in the past four years – 13 in 2017 alone – including from the Guild of Fine Food and the Academy of Chocolate and are sold online, to independent retailers and to the corporate world. They've already expanded once but have outgrown their production unit already. But for Shah, it's not about upping the profits but increasing the number of people Harry Specters helps. Since its inception in November 2012 there have been 260 beneficiaries, mostly young people with autism and Shah wants to help many more. A move into a bigger unit in 2018 won't just be about production but will add accommodation as well as a chocolate shop and café, giving those who don't have a natural affinity with chocolate-making the chance to benefit, whether through working in the shop or baking goods for the café.

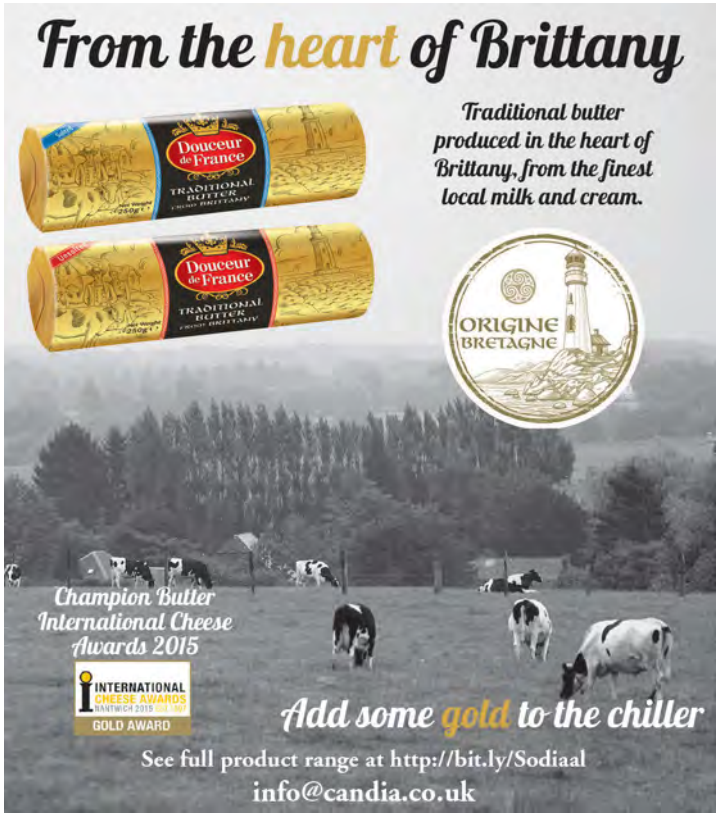
Shah, who left a job in corporate governance within the NHS to start the Cambridgeshire-based business, dreams of having production units across the UK so hundreds more people can benefit. But first, 2018 brings the move of their current sole production unit to a much larger home. "We started off very small in a tiny workshop at the back of our house," she says. "We moved to a 1,500sq ft production unit but now we've realised this place is too small as well. So we're looking to raise a further £500,000 to move to bigger premises, get bigger machinery, hire more people and do marketing and branding etc.

"The grand plan is to have a massive area where we can have our purpose-built production unit and residential arrangements for our staff so they can get into the habit



THE HOME OF AWARD-WINNING PRICES SPICES








AN ATTRACTIVE DISPLAY FROM HARRY SPECTERS

of independent living and become confident enough to move into their own places."

On top of that there will be a shop that Shah says will almost become a destination in its own right, helping strengthen the community that Harry Specters aims to build. "The mission is to improve the confidence and self-esteem of people with autism and Asperger's," she adds. "They don't want to be making chocolate or packaging all their lives but it's an environment they can understand." Like one employee who recently left to take up a job as a data analyst with Amazon. "It's about encouraging them to focus on the issues and what they can do – not what they can't."

The difficult balance to maintain, says Shah, is growing the business whilst retaining the necessary part of its social mission – employing people. "It's about balancing how much automation you go to because we want more jobs for the people working for us." She's also impatient to help more people and 2018 isn't just the right time – it hasn't come soon enough. "We always had big plans when we started. We just wanted something that could really change lives."

"No one knows what's in front of them – you just have to believe in yourself"



When it comes to Tori and Ben's Farm in Melbourne, Derbyshire, some might think 2018 is bringing a step back in time. Farming couple Tori and Ben Stanley rear Longhorn Cattle and flocks of Jacob, Portland and Texel sheep. The unprecedented popularity of their beef and lamb saw the couple open a brand new butchery and farm shop in 2017 but they're not stopping there, with 2018 bringing even more developments. One of those is the return of part of their land to the ancient parkland it once was when King John hunted the area in the 16th Century, allowing them to expand their Longhorn herd. The move, part of an agreement with Natural England, will also see the previously arable land planted with oak and ash trees, the same species that would have been there in King John's time, as well as wildflowers to attract more songbirds and bees and encourage the growth of flora and fauna.

The couple, who were declared Beef Innovators of the Year at the 2016 British Farming Awards, have plenty of other plans for 2018, including a packed calendar of events, PYO vegetables and a full 'farm to fork' development, taking visitors from their meat's beginning right through to cooking led by Masterchef 2014 finalist Sven-Hans Britt. For Tori, these developments will bring a raft of benefits, including: "growth, space and the potential to give our customer everything they want from their plate".

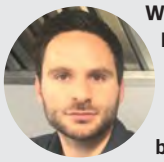
For her, there's never been a better time to grow their business. "The consumer wants to know where their food has come from – traceability is everything," she says. "And we have the vehicle to do it. The cow numbers grow all the time and we are now in a countryside stewardship scheme with Natural England establishing 80 acres of old grass parkland and fantastic bee, insect and bird stripes making happy cows and very happy environment."

With Mintel predicting that one of the main trends of 2018 will be a demand for transparency and traceability, it sounds like the Stanleys have the right idea. But with the future so uncertain, is taking big steps in 2018 a risk not worth taking? Not in Tori Stanley's view. "We are young and full of passion to make this journey the best it possibly can be for everyone – an experience like nothing else! People want to know where their food comes from, traceability is everything and now is the time to go for it!

"No one knows what's in front of them – you just have to believe in yourself. I believe if you are driven and passionate enough, who's to stop you?"


TORI STANLEY, CO-OWNER OF TORI & BEN'S WITH HER LONGHORN CATTLE

Location and tech are key for burgeoning food businesses, says Will Beresford, co-founder of FoodStars



We launched FoodStars back in 2015 to offer solutions for foodie start-up brands as well as established brands and major restaurant chains. The idea for the business grew when we started working in the food industry and noticed there was a gap in the market for commercial kitchen providers to offer fledging businesses, such as caterers, food delivery companies and restaurant chains, the space they required at an affordable rate and on a flexible, rolling contract.

Starting with just the one location, today we now have four Central London kitchens (in Shoreditch, Vauxhall, Bethnal Green and Bermondsey) with plans to expand even further. Our kitchens are fully-fitted spaces available on a flexible membership programme, offering emerging brands a platform to take their business one step further.

Tech platforms are enabling growth in this new market meaning new foodie start-up businesses can prosper without the need for a 'shop-front' base. The trend is widespread and if you're a start-up business looking to get your product out there, leveraging these platforms is a good way to help expand your customer base with minimal input and additional costs. Many tech delivery brands are well-known household names offering opportunity to maximise your visibility and trust within the marketplace. Many of our members including Zesty Kitchen, Gym Food, and The Lion's Prep base a large chunk of their business models on technology like this and have created their own 'online restaurant' or subscription company by taking advantage of what these food tech giants can offer.

Location is also important to our members as it is for any business which is new to the food industry. Being close to both the customer and the foodie scene is key to tapping into a wider clientele as well as potential suppliers to arrange meetings and contracts. Many food businesses struggle with the high prices associated with prime locations, especially in the capital city, so in turn, it is key to look for alternative and cost-effective solutions. By launching an online business and utilising work space which offers flexible contracts, businesses can enjoy the benefits of prime location while keeping costs low. Operating in a central location also means that brands can easily tap into the buzz of the vibrant area, as well as source local ingredients easily, whether it's from the fishmongers around the corner, or the fruit and veg market on the next street up.

As food businesses are now relying on their digital presence to expand, excellent reviews are a must for any fledging food business. If you're a new delivery business, you might want to encourage customers to share reviews of your on-time performance and quality of product to ensure you stand out from the crowd.

Finally, it is important for businesses to always monitor how they can overcome the high costs associated with setting up a business. In the food industry, kitchen equipment and supplies can make a huge dent in budgets so by looking for solutions like renting out commercial kitchen space which is already kitted out, brands can look to invest the saved capital elsewhere in the business.

> "Operating in a central location means that brands can easily tap into the buzz of the vibrant area, as well as source local ingredients easily"

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THINK **GREEN**

With food waste and ethics in the headlines, how and why should you think sustainably?



Sustainability is big news. From global behemoths adopting the Fairtrade logo on their packaging to young brands like New Producer Award Supreme Champion Change Please doing their bit to support their workers around the world, it seems like more than ever before the importance of being considerate of the planet, its people and resources when it comes to what we consume is key. Unfortunately, this awareness of our responsibility currently lies hand in hand with a culture of over-consumption and profit-over-people approach.

The Fairtrade Mark has worked wonders in increasing awareness of the importance of looking after the world's resources and continues to do brilliant work – but as this awareness grows, so does a myriad of businesses with sustainability at their heart.

Spare Fruit is a fine example. Passionate about reducing food waste, founder Ben Whitehead "can't comprehend how much perfectly edible food is needlessly wasted every year." He continues, "It's an important issue that drives our business and both a simple and complex problem. Simple because our behaviour as consumers can have dramatic effect on the amount wasted (7m tonnes are wasted at home) but complex because so much is ingrained in our westernised culture and the food systems and supply chains that serve us."

Spare Fruit's mission to rescue unwanted fruit from being wasted is perfectly in line with current consumer demands. "There's no doubt we undervalue food as a society and the natural resources needed to create it, but consumers are starting to care more about provenance, waste and of course taste – which is why we rescue fresh British produce that would otherwise be wasted and rescue consumers from poor quality, unsustainable and unhealthy snacks in the process," he says. "One day we'll look back at Supermarket culture in the future and wonder why on earth we spent vast amounts of valuable natural resources on mass producing, packing and shipping every type of fresh produce and product imaginable into one place, on the basis that someone might buy it, even if it doesn't taste very nice."

Earlier this year, at the Oxford Farming Conference, Environment Secretary Michael Gove stated that it was time for Britain's food and farm industry to "embrace change" and step away from the practices which had proven "destructive" to our planet. "Without action we face the progressive loss of the natural capital on which all growth – natural, human and economic – ultimately depends," he said, going on to announce that this 'natural capital' would be at the heart of future policy.

What can you do to help? As an independent food retailer, your responsibilities are three-fold. Firstly, work with producers who share this mission. There are businesses across all food and drink fighting for the cause, so your choices will be far from limited. Secondly, find out how to make your business more eco-friendly and act on it – read on for advice from Ecotricity – and thirdly, shout about what you're doing and make the most of the support that's out there in the form of the Soil Association and the Fairtrade Foundation.

FOUR OUT OF **FIVE** SAY THAT HAVING AN **ETHICAL** LABEL ON A PRODUCT **INCREASES** THE LIKELIHOOD OF THEM **BUYING** IT



PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT:

Jenny Costa, founder of Rubies in the Rubble

I started Rubies in the Rubble after discovering that a lot of perfectly good food was being wasted within our food supply chain. I became incredibly passionate about the need to reduce food waste where possible and to raise awareness of the need to value our food supply chain.

All our products are made from fresh fruit and vegetables, sourced direct from the farm, that have failed aesthetic standards or are simply surplus. With fruit and vegetables being perishable, if there is not a market for it, it will be discarded. Chutneys and relishes are the traditional, natural way of preserving fruit and vegetables, extending the shelf life of delicious seasonal fruit and veg to be enjoyed later on in the year.

With much of the food wasted in the UK coming from households, we really believe that change starts with education – this will hopefully result in behavioural and attitude changes. If more and more people start seeing food as a precious rather than unlimited resource, we would hope people would value it more and consume it in a resourceful way.

Our planet has the resources to feed its people, we just need to value them better.

> "Customers have a lot of power to make a difference to society in the way they purchase, and retailers have a great opportunity to influence that"



ORGANIC, SUSTAINABLE, ASTONISHINGLY FAIR, AND UTTERLY DELICIOUS

Traidcraft, the original fair trade pioneer, has launched a new and revolutionary brand of sustainable goodness – Eat Your Hat

Eat Your Hat cooks up incomparably delicious things from ethical ingredients that make people and the earth happier. Every bite is fairer than fair, sustainably-grown, organic, and transforms lives around the planet.

A range of quirky, on-trend flavoured chocolate slabs is the first addition to the Eat Your Hat portfolio. Each premium chocolate slab is free from GMOs, artificial colours and preservatives, and is wrapped in plant-based, recyclable, and compostable packing. These ethical alchemists have stirred the big wooden spoon of foodie politics and cooked up a range of tongue-tingling innovative chocolate slabs with the newest Fairtrade ingredients, including Milk Chocolate with South African Sea Salt, Milk Chocolate with Sri Lankan Cardamom, and Dark Chocolate with Sri Lankan Turmeric & Black Pepper.

Every single Fairtrade ingredient has a history. From traditionally-grown Fairtrade cocoa from smallholder farmers in São Tomé, Peru, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic to punchy fair trade Khoisan sea salt, harvested by the locals by using traditional salt pans in a village just west of Cape Town – the journey from being picked to consumed is utterly transparent.

How to make your business greener

In 2016. Ecotricity, Britain's leading green energy company, helped its business customers save 23,610 tonnes of CO2. That's equivalent to driving round the world 4,285 times!

Here are a few ideas of how you can make your business greener:

1 Replace your lighting with LEDs and motion sensor lighting – you'll be surprised at how much energy (and money) you save!

2 Recycle and compost wherever possible – set up designated recycling and compost bins in your office

3 If you're buying new equipment, make sure it's as efficient as possible by checking the European energy efficiency labels

4 Join the Ride to Work scheme, and encourage your staff to carshare, take public transport or walk to work

5 Switch to green energy – it's the single biggest thing any business can do to cut their carbon footprint and boycott fossil fuels

6 Make sure that your energy supplier reinvests in green energy, and doesn't just supply it. At Ecotricity, we use our customers' energy bills to fund the building of new sources of green energy – what we call turning 'bills into mills'

"Beer is a brilliant way of preserving the calories in bread – the UK's most wasted food item, with 44% wasted across the whole food chain – and has a far longer shelf-life. Since we launched in January 2016, we've rescued 6 tonnes of bread and brewed 56,000 litres of beer. Beer also brings people together in a celebratory way and as we say, to change the world, you have to throw a better party that those destroying it. Let's raise a Toast to ending food waste"

LOUISA ZIANE, CBO & CFO AT TOAST ALE



GUY TULLBERG, TRACKLEMENTS:

"We strive to put more back in than we take out of our community, environment and economy"

Since it started 46 years ago, Tracklements has been championing British Fairtrade.

It has made a commitment to buy British where possible and to pay a fair price for the best products available. With an underpinning principle to buy the best quality ingredients available Tracklements have a stated aim of buying first local, then national, then worldwide. If an ingredient, product or service can be bought in Britain, without a compromise on quality and without putting undue strain on a supplier, then Tracklements is honour-bound to buy it. Where an ingredient is not available in the UK but could be grown in the UK, Tracklements encourages farmers to supply the ingredient. For example, yellow mustard seed was not available in the UK, consequently Tracklements sought and contracted a local farmer to grow the crop. Furthermore, Tracklements pledged to recompense the farmer at least the equivalent monetary value he would have achieved with his existing crop – even in the event of the mustard crop failure.

But it's not just ingredients: Tracklements sources packaging including cardboard, labels, lids, glass and plastic from 107 suppliers 92 of whom (86%) are sourcing packaging from the UK. It also purchases its utilities (electricity, water, waste water removal, oil, waste collection) from six UK companies, and installed their first solar panels in March 2013 and completed the second stage installation in July 2014. The power generated from solar energy over the last 12 months is 109390kw, of which 24421kw was exported back to the national grid.

9/10 CONSUMERS TRUST FAIRTRADE

GET INVOLVED: FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

Consumers are increasingly demanding transparency in the sourcing of their food and are choosing to buy products with clear and demonstrable ethical credentials. The best way for retailers to meet this burgeoning demand is to stock products which have been certified by a trusted, independent third-party organisation – like Fairtrade.

Fairtrade Fortnight takes place between 26 February and 11 March 2018. The theme of 'Come on in to Fairtrade', encourages the British public to enter the world of the farmers and producers behind the Fairtrade products we know and love from bananas and coffee to gold and cotton.

Fortnight is an opportunity for independent retailers to emphasise their commitment to Fairtrade. Whether it's promoting Fairtrade Fortnight in-store, promoting on social media or supporting a local campaign group, there are a number of ways for independent retailers to get involved. The Foundation has produced a range of assets which can be downloaded from the Fairtrade Foundation website.





THE CENTR

Help your customers to arrange a crowd-pleasing afternoon tea with this selection of tempting treats



1 THE HANDMADE CAKE COMPANY CAKES

The Handmade Cake Company's Raspberry Victoria Sponge and Blackcurrant & Almond Mini Cakes are perfect for any afternoon tea spread. The Victoria sponge is filled with scrumptious buttercream and raspberry jam and makes for the ultimate centrepiece, while the mini cakes offer some truly exciting variety.
handmadecake.co.uk



2 BILLINGTON'S GINGERBREAD

For over 200 years, Billington's deliciously crisp and aromatic gingerbread fingers have been traditionally enjoyed with afternoon tea. Famous for their secret spicy recipe, the farmers' wives of the local town not only dunked them into tea but also port! They are available in packs of 15 fingers, and presented in a gift box with a viewing window and serving suggestions.
billingtonsgingerbread.co.uk



3 TAYLORS OF HARROGATE TEA

Taylors of Harrogate has been dedicated to sourcing and crafting teas with extraordinary flavour for 130 years. This collection of Earl Grey, English Breakfast and Afternoon Darjeeling is the ultimate addition to a quintessentially English afternoon tea.
taylorsoutofhome.co.uk

RE SPREAD





4 NETHEREND FARM BUTTER

By traditionally barrel-churning small batches of fresh cream from the south west of England, Netherend Farm produces a quality creamy butter that tastes like proper butter should. It is the ideal accompaniment to spread on fresh bread, scones and crumpets. You really can taste the difference.

netherendfarmbutter.co.uk

5 WILKIN & SONS REDUCED SUGAR JAMS



Wilkin & Sons has released a delicious new range of Tiptree Reduced Sugar Jams and Marmalade to meet the needs of consumers seeking a great flavour but with less sugar. Packed full of fruit, they contain 40% sugar compared with up to 67% sugar in the traditional Tiptree jams.

tiptree.com

6 RODDA'S CORNISH CLOTTED CREAM



Crafted to a family recipe from 1890, this local Cornish cream is gently baked until it is thick and crowned with Rodda's famous golden crust. It's perfect to top a warm, oven-fresh scone. A must-have addition to a traditional cream or afternoon tea.

roddas.co.uk



7 THE HANDMADE CAKE COMPANY SULTANA SCONES

Scones are an integral part of any afternoon tea, so make sure you pick the best. These sultana scones are just that – they're individually baked and contain plenty of juicy sultanas, making them the ultimate choice for the occasion.

handmadecake.co.uk

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MEAL **KITS**

Search volumes for recipe boxes were up 109% in the first nine months of 2017, says Sally-Jayne Wright. Are meal kits the next big thing?

IS THIS COOKING BY NUMBERS?

Pretty much. You place an online order for three dinners to be delivered to your home and the ingredients arrive in a cardboard box. Take a Riverford meal of lamb steaks, lentils and black kale. Riverford supplies meat, veg, and exactly the right quantity of tomatoes, capers and olives for the dressing. Follow the recipe in the box and dinner is served.

YOU MEAN YOU STILL HAVE TO COOK?!

Yes, but you don't have to decide what to have and trudge around Tesco. It's exciting when the box arrives. If you're gluten-free, low-carb, vegetarian or vegan, you can find specialist providers and tailored recipes.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE TREND?

Healthy convenience. Informed foodies know many ready meals contain ingredients a homemade meal wouldn't, such as maize starch. The same consumers watch Saturday Kitchen and feel guilty about 'ping' dinners. Plus they don't want the hassle and waste of tracking down tamarind paste for a one-off curry.

WHAT'S THE DOWNSIDE?

It's not cheap and even regulars feel guilty about the packaging. For a kedgeree recipe, Waitrose's Cook Well service sent us two eggs, each wrapped in kitchen paper, in two separate plastic cartons.

WHO PROVIDES MEAL KITS?

Berlin-based, Hello Fresh, are the market leaders. They claim to deliver 11 million meals a month and have customers in the US, Britain, Germany and Benelux countries. Other online subscription services include Gousto, Mindful Chef, Simply Cook, Amazon and Gourmio. For veg box suppliers, Riverford Organics and Abel & Cole, meal kits are a natural extension of what they do. Riverford supplies over 4,500 meals a week.

I'VE SEEN MEAL KITS IN SUPERMARKETS

Yes, the supermarkets have entered the arena – with mixed results. Waitrose dropped its Dinner for Tonight experiment, but in September declared its home delivery trial of Cook Well recipe boxes a success. Sainsbury's and Co-op trialled Hello Fresh and Gousto kits you can pick up in-store, and Aldi launched its own meal kit: Ready Set Cook.

AS AN INDEPENDENT RETAILER, SHOULD I BE SCARED?

Not yet. Recipe boxes account for under 1% of food-at-home sales. In a Nielsen survey, 59% of respondents in Europe said they preferred to buy fresh groceries at a physical store than purchase them online.

The meal kits market may be growing rapidly, but many subscription services are still making losses. Cynics attribute their fast growth to massive investment, novelty and generous introductory discounts.

> "Even without delivery, your customer will be grateful if someone else gathers the bits"

Online grocery shopping has been around for over 20 years but hasn't replaced bricks and mortar food stores. People like popping to the shops, and good online ideas can transfer to the high street. Graze healthy snack boxes started online but are now in 5,000 stores including Boots.

HOW CAN I MAKE THE MEAL KIT TREND WORK FOR US?

You are solving the 'what shall we have for dinner tonight?' problem for your customers. Meal kits provide them with up-to-date, healthy recipe ideas and make gathering the ingredients a doddle. So should you.

Email a weekly or monthly recipe to your database with a video demo on your website or recipe card in store. Assemble the ingredients in one section of the shop or flag ingredients with shelf stickers.

If you have many vegan, gluten-free or vegetarian customers and can supply bespoke recipe ideas linked to promotions, you're likely to do well.

Premium online fishmonger, The Fish Society, sells all you need for a luxury fish pie or lobster thermidor for next day delivery. Could your in-store fishmonger offer fresh or frozen fish pie mixes with a recipe? At the Butchery at Jimmy's (Doherty) Farm, they plan to put recipes in their meat boxes.

When Trend Watch's local Sainsbury's sold out of game pie casserole mix, organic butcher, Chadwicks, sold us an improvised and delicious mix of pigeon breast and venison. Add veg and a recipe and you've got yourself a meal kit.

ANY MORE IDEAS?

Copy Booths, Waitrose and Ocado and sell Scratch meal kits by mealsfromscratch.com. Or stock Alfez Moroccan Easy Cook Meal Kits which contain everything you need for a tagine with couscous.

Team up with a recipe box service. Charles Allen, co-founder of Yorkshire meal kit company, Born and Bred, says: "We're considering selling our recipe boxes through quality independent farm shops and delis, starting with farm shops in our local area of Yorkshire as a trial."

Think when your customer most needs support. Last year, Hello Fresh offered Xmas dinner recipe boxes at £69.99 for a family of four. Even without delivery, your customer will be grateful if someone else gathers the bits.

WILL THE TREND LAST?

Cooking unfamiliar recipes is fun but it's hard work. After testing six meal kits for this feature, Trend Watch couldn't wait for the easy option of a Charlie Bigham pie with frozen peas.

We think meal kit demand will peak, then flatten. Keep combining quality ingredients with healthy, up-to-date recipe ideas, promote like mad, and you should be fine.



Working with British farmers and growers to support British Fairtrade

BELIEVE IN THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF PICKLE

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Coldpress

Over the last 12 months Coldpress has taken significant strides to provide low sugar almond milks with more mainstream 'appetite appeal,' creating a sublime, 'free-from-heat' sub-category, whose appeal spreads beyond the 'dairy-free' community to encompass the active gym fraternity, the health conscious and true milkshake purists.

According to Coldpress founder Andrew Gibb, "Our fruity Nut Shakes are the next pit stop in our mission to bring superior taste and nutritional depth to the masses." The three new 250ml flavours include: Strawberry Oat Cashew, Raspberry, Beetroot Almond and Spiced Almond that will sit happily alongside Almond Banana Cacao & Almond Very Berry.

cold-press.com

Thursday Cottage

Traditional jam maker Thursday Cottage produces a range of mouthwatering jams, tasty marmalades and delicious curds for the independent trade only. Its award-winning Lemon Curd proved to be so popular that the company is now making other fruit curds including Sour Cherry Curd. Blood Orange Marmalade, made with oranges from the volcanic region of Sicily, has been added to its range of fine and chunky marmalades.

Its small batches of hand-filled jams include some amazing flavours: Gooseberry, Rhubarb & Ginger and Blueberry. For those seeking less sugar but a great fruity taste, there is a special range of Reduced Sugar Jams and Marmalades such as Blackcurrant Jam and Three Fruits Marmalade.

Thursday Cottage also produces an Organic range, a High Spirited range, gift selections and not forgetting a pretty 112g range which is perfect for hampers.

01621 814 529 pele@thursday-cottage.com thursday-cottage.com



Walkers Nonsuch



Deliciously creamy and perfect for summer months treats are Milk Chocolate and Banana Split Éclairs made by family company Walker's Nonsuch. With the chocolate located in the centre, there's no melting chocolate to handle, so you can just enjoy the chocolate taste and toffee chew. Emma Walker comments, "Our Milk Chocolate Éclairs are one of the best around. The toffee case is made with just good ingredients like whole milk and butter, and we use Belgian Milk Chocolate in the centre, and for Banana Split we use a premium white chocolate"

The Éclairs are available in 150g everyday bags. The colours of the bags reflect the product varieties with Milk Chocolate Éclairs in a cream and purple bag and Banana Split in a yellow and green bag.

The family was established in 1894 with a focus of making toffee and chocolate éclairs only. Bags retail from £1.20 and come packed in a shelf ready box.

01782 321 525 sales@walkers-nonsuch.co.uk walkers-nonsuch.co.uk



Joe & Sephs

From the makers of Joe & Seph's Gourmet Popcorn comes a range of indulgent Caramel Sauces. Discover 12 tantalising flavours such as Salted Caramel, Gin & Tonic, Madagascan Vanilla & Prosecco Caramel Sauce.

Perfect for home baking, drizzling on pancakes, pouring over ice cream or devouring with a spoon! Each jar is lovingly handmade by our team of skilled pastry chefs, using fresh double cream and only the best, all-natural ingredients.

Joe & Seph's is a family business from London, which launched in 2010 with the mission to create the best-tasting popcorn in the world. Seven years on, it now has a range of over 50 innovative flavours of gourmet popcorn and 12 premium caramel sauces, which combined have won 34 Great Taste Awards!

0208 450 0922 joe@joeandsephs.com joeandsephs.co.uk



Island Bakery

Offer your customers Island Bakery's range of all-butter organic biscuits from the Isle of Mull in the Hebrides. The biscuits are baked in a unique oven, fuelled by local and sustainable sources of wood, and all the electricity for the bakery is generated from the island's plentiful supplies of rain and wind.

The fun packaging tells the story of the island and its characters, presided over by the much-admired highland cow, MacMoo!

Luckily the biscuits can be found beyond the island's shores. Joe and Dawn Reade would encourage stockists to get in touch so they can be included on the stockist database on the Island Bakery website, which helps biscuit-seekers to find stockists near them.

01688 302 223 info@islandbakery.co.uk islandbakery.co.uk



Tims Dairy

From award-winning family producers and specialists in making Greek style yogurt, these delicious thick set yogurts are available in Natural, Passion Fruit and Toasted Coconut flavours and made with British milk and cream, bio-live cultures and only natural ingredients.

Set not stirred, these yogurts have real indulgent spoon appeal. Plus, there is no added sugar in the Natural option. They are ideal on their own, served with fruit and on porridge, used as a healthy alternative to cream and as an ingredient in cooking.

01494 541 890 info@timsdairy.co.uk timsdairy.co.uk



The Garlic Farm

Every product category has a 'best in class', which is rarely the highest volume line, often referred to as the 'Rolls Royce'. Our aim with the new Black Garlic Mayonnaise was to take the best elements of our top-selling garlic mayonnaise and lift the citrus and spice profiles without compromising smoothness.

The caramel notes of the sweet, heat-aged black garlic help achieve this. Only minimal quantities of black garlic are needed to bring a velvety richness and with the addition of Dijon mustard, this mayonnaise has unprecedented depth. With asparagus or lobster tails, it is without question the luxury of all luxuries.

Presented with a textured, metallic label for extra presence on the shelf, this could well be a game-changing innovation in the mayonnaise space, RRP £4.25. Available direct or through Cotswold Fayre.

01983 865 378 thegarlicfarm.co.uk



field fare

Premium, frozen food specialist, field fare, makes buying frozen food really easy for retailers due to its extensive product range.

Boasting a wide collection of 80 loose serve products including fruits, vegetables, fish and bakery. Over 40 quality, high meat content single and double portion ready meals and savouries; award-winning classics like Lasagne Verde to deep-filled pies. Plus, an array of luxury desserts, namely roulades and cheesecakes.

Impactful branding with food photography is also available for in-store freezers, which create an eye-catching display for each product category.

No other frozen food supplier offers such a diverse product range, meaning field fare can supply a retailer with all their frozen food needs. Keeping the buying process simple and efficient with one order, one delivery and one invoice.

01732 864 344 enquiries@field-fare.com field-fare.com



Puddingstone Distillery

A critically-acclaimed range of gins from the award-winning Hertfordshire-based Puddingstone Distillery.

Pitching camp on the boundaries of classic and contemporary, Campfire London Dry Gin leads with juniper and sweet orange notes. Golden berry, rooibos and hazelnut lend character to a rich,complex palate and sweet finish.

Our Navy Strength is bigger in every respect. Heady aromas and resinous, peppery, juniper notes are the result of an increased botanical content, giving you a sublimely smooth 57% gin.

Campfire Cask Aged crosses spirits categories and draws from the past to bring you a truly wonderful gin that will sip neat over ice or change the way you make gin cocktails forever.

01442 502 033 puddingstonedistillery.com

Jelly Belly

Jelly Belly Candy Company is truly excited to launch a special line of BeanBoozled® Minion Edition jelly beans - the first licensed partnership for the BeanBoozled brand.

Illumination and Universal Pictures' Despicable Me franchise is of course known for its sweet, yet subversive, Minions.

Capturing the mischievously fun nature of Minions with a truly despicable selection of BeanBoozled flavours, the Jelly Belly bean line-up re-introduces the BeanBoozled classic Pencil Shavings (teamed with Ba-Na-Na, Minions LOVE Bananas), plus the brand new, and quite deplorable, Minion Fart (teamed with Green Apple and inspired by the Dr Nefario character's favourite gadget: the Fart Gun!)

We dare you to be despicable!

Available next month, packages include the 45g flip top box, 54g bag and the 95g Spinner Tin with integral spin wheel.

01727 829 010 uksales@bestimports.co.uk jellybelly.co.uk





Manílife

Peanut butter sales are growing by over 12.8% per year. No wonder that new brands are popping up all over the place.

Manílife is different. Our unique award winning taste comes through sourcing the finest hi-oleic peanuts direct from a single estate in South America, batch roasting them to perfection in London before blending them into thick, creamy peanut butter heaven.

Three distinct blends are available. The 'must have' is our Deep Roast peanut butter – voted the tastiest in the UK, perfect on toast, in porridge, or as an ingredient. ManíLife is a strong repeat seller.

Our delicious selection includes Deep Roast Crunch, Original Crunch and Creamy, available in retail (295g), monster (1kg), mega (5kg) and now our new mini pots (30g).

Available now from Hider, Marigold, CLF and Stores Supply.

07794 573 692 orders@mani-life.com mani-life.com

Hawkshead Relish

Whole garlic bulbs are cooked in a low heat for up to 50 days, and once they become black, sticky and naturally sweet, we then blend onions, tomatoes, balsamic vinegar, herbs and spices to create a rich, savoury ketchup with a sweetness that is perfect to serve with meat.

Ideally serve alongside aged steak or BBQ meats such as sausages, burgers, it makes a delicious marinade for chicken, spread on fish such as a cod steak or even for just dipping chips in! The uses are endless, and of course it is a great kitchen essential to have to add to stocks, sauces and dishes such as a tasty cottage pie or roasted vegetables.

From its launch in April 2017, this delicious ketchup has already proved it's a store cupboard essential by winning a Great Taste Award, Great British Food Award and being shortlisted for The Grocer's New Product Award, as well as being featured multiple times on BBC Radio 2.



01539 436 614
info@hawksheadrelish.com
hawksheadrelish.com



Divine

Divine is a bean-to-bar chocolate made with the best of everything - top quality cocoa, natural cocoa butter and vanilla - and that is what makes it so good and delicious. Divine is traceable, single origin, Fairtrade certified. We are proudly palm oil-free, soya-free with all natural ingredients and no artificial flavours.Only using cocoa beans that are 'Pa Pa Paa'!, meaning 'best of the best', and are grown by the farmers of Kuapa Kokoo, a co-operative of over 80,000 cocoa farmers in Ghana who own 44% of Divine and receive a share of the profits.

steve@divinechocolate.com
divinechocolate.com/uk



Pasta Garofalo

Garofalo, the premium Italian pasta makers, produces many different shapes, 72 at the last count, all available in the UK for you to offer your customers; from the well known Fusilli and Macaroni through to the less well known Lumaconi and Orecchiette. We only use high quality durum wheat semolina which meets strictly controlled criteria, and the result is a consistent, premium pasta that is always a pleasure to eat every time, whichever shape you choose!

Garofalo traditional pasta, organic pasta and whole wheat pasta, made with high quality durum wheat semolina, is formed using a bronze die for a rough and porous surface perfect for soaking up any sauce.

Garofalo gluten-free pasta is made with corn flour, rice flour and quinoa, and the result is a high fibre gluten-free pasta for all to enjoy, not just those on a gluten-free diet. Garofalo pasta is suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

All of our pasta is stocked in the UK for immediate delivery through wholesalers and distributors. Please contact the Garofalo UK office for more information on pasta shapes, the ranges we do and the wholesalers stocking Garofalo pasta.

01438 813 444 info@garofalo.co.uk
pastagarofalo.it



Beckleberry's

It's a quirky truism but Beckleberry's owes a debt of gratitude to the drinks cabinet of Peter's nan when it comes to providing a creative spark for its flourishing ice cream and sorbet business.

Back in 2008, Blackcurrant & Kirsch, Beckleberry's pudding provider's flagship sweet treat was conceived following a spontaneous rummage amongst the bottom shelf of intriguing nightcaps.

Ten years on and Ian Craig (Peter's father and co-founder) felt the moment was right to revisit this liquid Aladdin's cave and re-create one his favourite tipples from the 1970's: Blackcurrant & Martini.

According to Peter, "Sorbets with a 'tipple twist' have been a massive hit for us. They're dairy-free, tapping into gin's renaissance, provide a peek into yesteryear nostalgia and build on our success in top-end hotels, bars (cocktail accompaniments) and best in class delis, cafes and farm halls as all-singing puds."

beckleberrys.co.uk



Biomel

Today's consumers are more aware than ever of the value of probiotics in maintaining a healthy gut, and Biomel is the perfect product to satisfy your health-conscious customers. Containing billions of live active cultures and vitamins B6, D and calcium to promote immune and digestive health, Biomel is dairy-free, gluten-free, soy-free and suitable for vegans – not to mention a delicious way to incorporate probiotics into your diet!

sayhello@biomel.life
biomel.life



Peter's Yard

Peter's Yard's authentic sourdough crispbread is made in the UK by a team of skilled bakers, following the original Swedish recipe, using natural ingredients including organic flour, organic fresh milk and a precious naturally fermenting sourdough that is allowed to ferment for 16 hours before each batch is baked. Charcoal & Rye includes a generous level of charcoal that produces an attractive colour and distinct flavour. The Peter's Yard range is the natural choice for cheese as it doesn't overpower or mask the flavours of the cheese, and the Charcoal & Rye variety works well with all types of cheese but is particularly recommended alongside a Brie or soft goats' milk cheese. The 90g Charcoal & Rye Crispbread retails at £2.95.

07999 461 761 orders@petersyard.com petersyard.com

Olly's Olives

Upgrade your olive game and "olive the dream" today with Olly's Olives.

On a mission to free olives from the shackles of unnecessary, unhealthy processes and bland packaging, Olly has launched the world's only unpasteurised snack pouch of olives. By not heat-treating his fresh, juicy Halkidiki olives, they retain stronger flavours, crunchier textures and more nutritional goodness than ever before.

These olives come in three fresh flavours and funky packaging: Garlic & Basil, Chilli & Rosemary and Lemon & Thyme; with new flavours coming soon.

On top of all that, they can be stored ambiently and have a 12-month shelf life, as well as being delivered in shelf-ready packaging with clip strips.

From a nutritional standpoint, these olives are packed to the brim with pure, natural green goodness. They contain no artificial preservatives, no stones, no messy oils, are 100% vegan and perfect for a ketogenic diet.

07956 363 318 olly@ollysolives.com
ollysolives.com





Wharfe Valley Farms

Wharfe Valley Farms is satisfying consumer demand for cold pressed rapeseed oil with its range of products including oils, vinegars, dressings, mayonnaise and truffle-infused oil.

Cold pressed rapeseed oil is becoming increasingly popular because of increased awareness of its health benefits and versatility, and Wharfe Valley Farms, which was one of the UK's first rapeseed producers in 2009, uses traditional methods of chemical-free harvesting to produce its range. As well as being a healthier option for consumption compared to higher fat culinary oils, cold pressed rapeseed oil has a higher temperature burn point - up to 230 degrees - and has proven to be popular with TV chefs.

Wharfe Valley Farms produces a wide range of oils which have cemented the brand as a leading Yorkshire producer, including Original Rapeseed Oil, Garlic & Rosemary, Oak Smoked, Black Pepper and spray oils.

01937 572 084 oils@wharfevalley.co.uk wharfevalley.co.uk



Windmill Hill Fruits Ltd

Finest Fresh Fruit... Frozen.

Anthony and Christine Snell run an established award-winning soft fruit farm based in South Herefordshire. The family grow fruit varieties especially for their flavour, harvest them in the height of the season and quickly freeze to ensure locked in freshness.

Our range provides customers with: ● British Fruit ● Hand Selected Whole Berries ● Fruit with a Superior Flavour ● Healthy and Nutritious ● Professionally Packaged

01989 730 229 sales@ajandcisnell.co.uk
britishfrozenfruits.co.uk



Ross & Ross Food

The award-winning and Cotswolds-based Ross & Ross Food specialise in handmade British food gifts. Their range now includes Homemade Curing Kits, British BBQ gift packs and a Roast Range.

Their Curing Kit range now includes Bacon, Spicy Bacon and Salmon, with an array of brand new curing salts. The Curing Kit range is available in Original size, XL (six cures) and as a Complete Collection, available to trade in cases of 10.

These are ideal foodie products for stocking in delis and gift shops, with each kit including everything you need to cure bacon and salmon at home, just add pork or salmon.

The Salmon kit win Gift of the Year in 2017 and the XL Bacon kit is a finalist for Gift of the Year 2018.

01608 645 503 orders@rossandrossfood.co.uk
rossandrossfood.co.uk



Thai Taste

Thai Taste was launched in 2000 by a team of foodies who were passionate about the delicious, yet quite simple, dishes of Thailand. Working with Thai chefs, they created a complete range of authentic products, made in Thailand with fresh ingredients, that would enable both novices and professionals to prepare delicious Thai meals in the comfort of their own homes.

Now owned by Empire Bespoke Foods, the brand continues to supports Duang Prateep Foundation, with a percentage of every sale donated to the cause.

Founded and located in the slums of Bangkok in 1978 by ambitious slum-dweller Prateep Hata, Duang Prateep, meaning 'Flame of Hope', delivers education, happiness and hope to those in need.

This year, Thai Taste is harnessing the power of social media to communicate and engage directly with its community of Thai cooks. The brand has nearly 27,000 followers across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter and is investing in these channels to share recipes, cooking tips and insights on Thai culture and cuisine.

0208 537 4080
thaitaste@empirebespokefoods.com
thaitaste.co.uk

Made For Drink

Made for Drink was borne from a heartfelt belief that there must be more to meaningful, artisanal alternative to old-school snacking (potato crisps or nuts). The uncompromising vision was to establish a new breed of substantial foodie snacks packed with intriguing flavours, foodie gravitas and worldly provenance.

Duck Fritons, (inspired by Fritons de Canard from Gascony) are ideally suited to accompany a deserving pint of craft IPA, whilst Chorizo Thins, which use only best-in-class Spanish ingredients, are a moreish match for a full-bodied rioja. This March the Made for Drink embraces Pilsner appreciation with sublime Mangalitza Salami Chips.

According to founder Daniel Featherstone, 'There's no question that Tom Kerridge's Pub in the Park was a seminal moment for our fledgling brand as consumers tucked into the notion that a top notch nibble sits at the very heart of a great night out with family and friends.'

madefordrink.com



Hambletons

Hambletons have been making delicious pies, ready meals and desserts in our kitchen in Oakham, Rutland for over 10 years.

Our team of chefs and bakers use traditional methods which ensure that every meal is unique with guaranteed taste and quality at its core.

All of our pies, ready meals and desserts are produced from the finest locally-sourced ingredients, made by hand and cooked in small batches.

Each batch is always taste tested to maintain our high standards and delicious taste. Then they are quickly frozen to lock in all the nutrients, flavour and freshness.

Our turnkey retailing solution means that we will have you selling our pies, ready meals and desserts in no time.

If you feel that we can support your brand and would like to talk to us about starting a retail partnership, please contact us at the details below.



01572 723 800
info@hambletonfarms.co.uk
hambletonfarms.co.uk

THE PRIDE OF YORKSHIRE

We speak to some of the county's best retailers and producers to learn how the county's foodie reputation resonates with shoppers

It must be nice to run a deli or farm shop based in Yorkshire. From scrumptious parkin to luscious, crumbly Wensleydale cheese, the county rightfully receives plenty of kudos for its rich bounty of fare. As the largest county in the UK, it boasts fields of fresh produce – like world-renowned rhubarb – which is sought after by consumers old and young alike, not to mention hundreds of businesses specialising in craft beer, high welfare meat, quality confectionery and the like.

So what are tourists visiting the popular county looking for besides the traditional food products? And what can retailers located outside of Yorkshire stock to best represent the revered region? From artisan chocolate to top quality cured meats, the county just oozes class. But don't just take our word for it, here some bastions of Yorkshire produce share their favourite products.



RETAIL INSIGHT:

Steve Fink, owner of FINK in Boroughbridge

HOW DOES YOUR YORKSHIRE PROVENANCE DICTATE WHAT YOU CHOOSE TO STOCK?

We try to stock an eclectic but authentic range, and quality trumps everything. Traditional Yorkshire products like Wensleydale cheese, Lottie Shaw's Yorkshire Parkin and Yorkshire Tea are no-brainers. We also stock products with oxymoronic names, like Three Little Pigs' Yorkshire Chorizo – it is really good!

HOW BIG A DRAW ARE YORKSHIRE PRODUCTS TO YOUR CUSTOMERS?

Just like us, our regular customers seem to be driven by quality above anything else. However, new Yorkshire products always attract great interest and we can tell whether they are winners just by seeing repeat purchases. Visitors are always attracted to our Yorkshire lines and Yorkshire-themed hampers and gift boxes are always in demand.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP-SELLING YORKSHIRE PRODUCTS?

Some of the Yorkshire cheeses, like those from Shepherds Purse, are increasingly recognised for their fantastic quality and sell really well all year round. Lottie Shaw's bakery products and confectionery from Farrah's of Harrogate and Guppy's Chocolates are really popular and do well in hampers. Through spring we stock the finest fresh asparagus from the fantastic Spilman Farming just across the river in Helperby, and the bounty continues through summer with their fabulous strawberries and raspberries. And our own Fink-branded products, most of which are made for us by local suppliers, also do well.

WHAT ARE SOME LESSER-KNOWN YORKSHIRE PRODUCTS THAT OUR READERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

I've already mentioned Three Little Pigs' Rare-Breed Chorizo, but if you haven't tried it, do so soon! We're also massive fans of Staal Smokehouse – Justin from the company really knows his stuff and his smoked salmon and duck are exceptional. And for something a little sweeter, seek out Jane Stammers' Tipple Tails Fruit Cakes – a wonderful range of luxurious and rather boozy fruit cakes. We love them!

WHAT IS IT ABOUT YORKSHIRE THAT MAKES IT SUCH AN ESTEEMED FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCING REGION?

We're lucky that we're a large county with a long and proudly independent history and a strong identity. But of more practical importance, so many of the raw materials used in Yorkshire products are grown, raised, caught, milled or made within the county boundaries. Very few regions can boast quite such a diverse and well-developed homegrown supply chain.



> Harrogate is a popular tourist destination and visitors to the town often visit Weetons to take a little piece of Yorkshire home with them

> Very few regions can boast quite such a diverse and well-developed homegrown supply chain



FROM LAND & SEA



Yorkshire isn't all about cheese and rhubarb, it boasts some fantastic fish and seafood, too. We catch up with Tracy Bell, retail manager at Ramus Seafoods, about the rich bounty that comes in from the county's coast:

"People from Yorkshire are immensely proud of their county and will always support and promote products hailing from the region. It obviously helps that the quality is excellent and we are very fortunate to have such fabulous suppliers and producers on our doorstep.

"In our retail shop we try to source locally as much as possible. We buy fresh fish and shellfish from the Yorkshire coast when available: our smoked salmon comes from Bleiker's in north Yorkshire; our rainbow trout is from Kilnsey in the Yorkshire Dales and many of our ambient products are also made in the county.

"When placed side-by-side with a similar item, our customers will always choose a Yorkshire product. During our summer Lobster Festival, the Yorkshire east coast lobsters proved more popular than the Canadian ones, even though they were more expensive.

"Our frozen fish stock is made locally by True Foods – it's deliciously flavoursome and far more popular with our customers than the tinned stock. Our range of the Yorkshire-hailing Steenbergs' spices, rubs and blends also sell really well, especially the ones that are specially designed to go with fish. They are organic, Fairtrade and full of flavour."

HOW WE BUILT A FAMOUS YORKSHIRE BRAND

David Hartley, managing director of Wensleydale Creamery, on how the county shapes the cheesemaker's past, present and future:

"The Wensleydale Creamery is a thriving business at the heart of its deeply rural community in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Our location is hugely important and underpins our brand values of heritage and provenance; we source milk from local farms to handcraft Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese in its rightful home of Wensleydale.

"Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese is something very special and very distinctive; with almost 1,000 years of cheese-making history in Wensleydale, The Wensleydale Creamery has become a custodian of a historic cheese.

"We are most definitely Yorkshire through and through, and very passionate about our Yorkshire credentials. People are often shocked to hear how much 'Wensleydale cheese' is not actually made in Wensleydale.

"Yorkshire Wensleydale is driving the growth and market share of the crumbly cheese category. We firmly believe this is due to the way we support and promote our brand, showcasing our unique brand values based upon quality, heritage and provenance; using milk from over 40 local farms and traditional methods to handcraft cheese to time-honoured recipes, which consumers can engage with and relate to. People continue to buy trusted British brands, and are supporting and backing British farming."

"Yorkshire is a fundamental part of our ethos"

Established in 2005, Weetons in Harrogate has built a reputation for being a quality independent. James Murray, head of food at the renowned food hall, explains how the county plays a part across the entire business



PROVENANCE

Weetons prides itself on providing the very best local produce within our café, deli, butchery counter and food hall. All of our meat and eggs come from within 30 miles of Harrogate, and we stock a huge selection of local cheeses. We have over 50 private label products, which are all made locally by small independent producers, maintaining our ethos for quality, independence and Yorkshire, we source products from over 100 local suppliers, many of whom have been with us since we opened 13 years ago.

BRAND YORKSHIRE

Yorkshire is a fundamental part of our ethos and our customers value this. Together with our strong brand and stylish presentation, they know we will do our best to source locally and are appreciative of the labelling. For example, our own private label products and new Chef To Go ready meals are all branded with 'handmade in Yorkshire'. Harrogate is also a popular tourist destination and visitors to the town often visit Weetons to take a little piece of Yorkshire home with them.

TOP-SELLERS

Our home-roasted premium beef is award-winning and extremely popular, and our in-store prepared selection of dried meats and charcuterie are developing a real name for themselves. We stock a huge selection of locally-made jams, chutneys and sauces, which our customers love as home pantry products or for gifting.

LESSER-KNOWN PRODUCTS

Lottie Shaw's bakery products are very popular in-store. Not only are they made in Yorkshire, but they deliver fantastic quality, presentation and branding. Our standard stock lines, such as Yorkshire parkin and shortbread biscuits, are complemented by seasonal additions and gift packs, so there is always variety but with consistent quality.

> "We are most definitely Yorkshire through and through, and very passionate about our Yorkshire credentials"



MEET THE CHEESEMAKER

With 25 years of experience, and over 50,000 tonnes of cheese produced in that space of time, it's no wonder that The Wensleydale Creamery continues to be at the top of its game

Looking at the bustling Visitor Centre, which attracts an impressive 300,000 visitors a year, it's hard to imagine that 25 years ago The Wensleydale Creamery, based at Hawes in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, was on the verge of collapse. But it wasn't something which those who worked in the business and the local community were willing to let happen.

When the owner at the time, Dairy Crest, closed the factory in 1992 and shifted production of Wensleydale cheese to Lancashire, it could have been the end of the line for the famous Yorkshire cheesemaker. Thankfully, four managers and a local businessman formed a management buyout and, with 11 members of staff, reopened and kick-started production for Christmas – and they've never looked back since.

Today, The Wensleydale Creamery is a thriving business at the heart of its deeply rural community. It sources milk from over 40 local farms, contributing more than £12m to the local economy through milk payments, wages and purchases. With over 230 staff across two sites, the business exports to countries across the globe – a far cry from where things were in the early '90s.







Worldwide recognition

"The role of managing director offers tremendous diversity, and this variety is very rewarding," explains David Hartley, current managing director of The Wensleydale Creamery. "There have been so many highlights over the years, but a real milestone was securing European Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status for Yorkshire Wensleydale in December 2013."

Achieving PGI status is a guarantee of quality and authenticity, which is recognised in both domestic and international markets. It also ensures clear differentiation in the marketplace from other Wensleydale cheeses that are manufactured in other counties around the UK. Other cheesemakers outside of the designated area cannot call the Wensleydale cheese which they produce, Yorkshire Wensleydale. "With an increasing number of consumers looking for local, authentic products with strong heritage and provenance, the PGI achievement provides a guarantee," says David. "With the PGI logo clearly displayed on the packaging, consumers can buy with confidence, secure in the knowledge they are purchasing the authentic product, which offers the best flavour."

Creating a classic

Although the company's most well-known product is its traditional eponymous variety, its Yorkshire Wensleydale & Cranberries cheese is definitely giving it a run for its money. Sweet and fruity, creamy and crumbly, it's a delicious and versatile cheese perfect for snacking, nibbling and both sweet and savoury cooking alike! "Having become firmly established as a 'core' cheese in the blended cheese category, with the largest share – nearly 25% – Yorkshire Wensleydale & Cranberries continues to lead the way, driving the growth in this sector," explains David. "The cheese was an original creation from The Wensleydale Creamery over 20 years ago, and, due to its popularity and success, has since been copied by many other manufacturers."

The cheesemaker continues to broaden its portfolio, boasting blues, sheep's milk, naturally smoked and traditional-style English cheeses, which come in numerous formats including pre-pack and truckles. "As we go into 2018, we feel confident and ambitious," he says. "We're developing the team, investing in our two sites, launching new products, updating and adapting in line with market needs. We've got a number of exciting products in the pipeline, including a plain variant of our popular Yorkshire Yogurt, and we're stepping into other categories, too – the first one being a Yorkshire Brie!"

See for yourself

Retailers and cheese fans alike are encouraged to take a journey through the art of cheesemaking by visiting a new interactive Viewing Gallery at The Wensleydale Creamery Visitor Centre, complete with touch screens displaying the entire cheesemaking process, plus 'behind the scenes' footage. Many cheesemaking secrets can be discovered, such as how cranberries are put into Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese, how blue cheese gets its hue, and how miniature cheeses are coated in wax.

A trip to the Cheese & Gift Shop offers visitors the opportunity to sample over 20 varieties of cheese – shoppers can even build their own hampers and have them gift-wrapped. "We are bringing in 300,000 visitors a year now to our successful Visitor Centre, and we want to offer an enjoyable and memorable experience, from the service, to the coffee, to the retail shopping experience, and of course, the cheese," says David. "The customer wants a story, and we have that in abundance; from our product, to our people and our provenance."

> "The customer wants a story, and we have that in abundance; from our product, to our people and our provenance"





INDUSTRY 101

Adam Pritchard, commercial director at Windfall answers some fundamental FAQs

WHAT'S THE NUMBER ONE OBSTACLE THAT FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCERS FACE?

After setting up and successfully selling my own juice business, Pomegreat – I have first-hand experience of the difficulties that start up food and drink brands face. Now, in my capacity as commercial director at Windfall, part of the role involves providing consultancy services. It's essential to want the businesses you work with to succeed!

The most frequent issue that we encounter is food and drink brands not being able to meet working capital requirements. Fundamentally, you need a robust infrastructure and satisfy the level of resources that are required to survive in this sector. There are many ways that businesses can do



this. However, some traditional financing options carry heavy penalties such as fixed fees and high interest charges. These can be avoided by finding partners that understand the sector and your needs.

THE TERM 'LOGISTICAL NIGHTMARE' IS COMMON PARLANCE AMONGST FOOD AND DRINK BUSINESSES – WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS SO AND WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

It's true, there are obstacles associated with logistics. There are often external factors at play that cannot be controlled, such as adverse traffic and weather conditions. The best solution is to build good connections to be able to fulfil orders and add value. Build relationships with hauliers and have a skilled team in place that can manage and cope with unforeseen situations with clarity and calm.

When supplying to multiples, you are dealing with the most exacting businesses that minimise costs at every opportunity to keep prices low and competitive. Brands absolutely must be able to meet their requirements.

It's inevitable that producers can cause themselves an enormous headache by having too tight a demand to fulfil orders on time and in full. You risk being poorly rated and fined if your logistics performance doesn't meet the mark.

It is also a complex process to get to grips with. Unfortunately mistakes with large volume orders can sink a small business that's just starting out. The solution is to have a robust structure in place, this is critical to meeting a brand's aspirations from the outset.

WHAT DO BACK OFFICE FUNCTIONS INVOLVE AND HOW DOES OUTSOURCING WORK?

The back office is the engine room of your business. In the very simplest terms you have to ensure the right products make it from A to B; that they're delivered on time and that all administrative elements of that process, from stock management to invoicing, is properly managed.

An effective back office demands considerable resources. To succeed you must take the bull by the horns, in order to be resilient to the pressures that your business will come up against.

Employing talented people to manage these day to day functions is costly and full of pitfalls. Yet, there are alternatives available – such as outsourcing to a dedicated professional team. There is currently a really low percentage of business that outsource their back office functions; primarily due to lack of awareness that these services even exist. However, the benefits can be huge, particularly as it significantly reduces overheads and the pain associated with recruiting and retaining high calibre staff.

IN TERMS OF STABILISING CASH FLOW, IS THERE ANYTHING THAT START-UP BUSINESSES CAN DO?

There tends to be a slight misconception by many start-up food and drink businesses. Obviously, they're desperate for growth to get their brand of the ground. But sadly, nine times out of ten its growth that causes the biggest problems. Many businesses are not prepared to be able to scale up operations to fulfil that longed for big order – it's a real problem. One of the ways to overcome this common obstacle is to have a reliable and cost effective financing facility in place.

IS THERE A HEAVY PENALTY FOR USING THIS SERVICE?

Brands can be heavily penalised by their finance provider. It's a bit of a minefield – in terms of debentures, personal guarantees and fulfilling minimum annual costs. Fortunately, there are specialist providers that know the market inside out, who do not demand these requirements. You should look for a complete, flexible solution that matches your business needs, and be able to access this facility as and when you need the service. Free set up costs, fast implementation and managed credit control removes a whole host of difficulties. At every step of the way, transparency is essential. If you know in advance how the service is structured, then you're able to manage your bottom line. Agree fixed rates up front and avoid any hidden costs.

TOP TIPS FOR FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCERS

- You must be 100% sure of your products quality and integrity
- Invest in brand design and positioning
- Have in place a business structure and financing arrange that enables you to grow; don't restrict your potential at the outset



> "Succeeding in this industry is never down to one factor alone. All three areas that I've outlined are essential to guaranteeing your brand gets off the ground – that and a little good fortune goes a long way"

TACKLING FOOD FRAUD

New science and technologies are now available to combat food fraud, says Rupert Hodges, Executive Director at Oritain



Britain is firmly establishing itself as a nation of foodies. The fact that there is a celebrity chef sharing recipes on TVs most nights and that so many pubs are continuing to shift their focus on food rather than booze bears testament to that. As part of that trend, people are also increasingly concerned about the origin of food, demanding healthier and more ethically sourced produce. But this love for authentic foods comes at a price. The FSA estimates a whopping 10% of food sold in supermarkets is adulterated and that counterfeiting and piracy could account for over £1bn of the UK's annual food and drink trade.

Food fraud can affect all businesses, from small boutique fine food retailers to large household brand names. It can destroy revenue, affect margins across the whole supply chain and reputation, as well as result in serious health and safety risks. According to the Grocery Manufacturing Association, a single incident of food fraud can cost a company between 2-15% of their revenue.

For fine food retailers, reputation for excellence is tantamount, and the importance of provenance associated with their premium products is even more important. Many fine food businesses are built on trust, with customers trusting that what they are buying is authentic and origins are genuine. When the trust between a supplier or retailer and their consumers is broken, those values for quality and provenance are thrown in jeopardy.

Some of the foods targeted by fraudsters recently have included Manuka honey, where four out of five jars of this premium honey were identified as fake. Manuka honey is specifically associated with an area in New Zealand where the bees pollinate the native Manuka bush and origin is critical in assuring provenance. Similarly, 2,470,000 caged eggs were sold as free range, and the list goes on.

The good news is many retailers are taking this issue more seriously – not least because of warnings by experts like Professor Chris Elliot from Queens University Belfast that another horsemeat scandal is likely. "Food fraud is one of the biggest challenges worldwide," he told our team. "It is very well organized and happening at a massive level." It remains a huge challenge as fraudsters will go to great lengths to cover up scams.

Fortunately, new science and technology has made tackling food fraud more effective now than ever. Science is very much leading the charge in stamping out food fraud and removing any doubt in provenance. These new technologies mean that scientific audits can be made at any point during the supply chain to ensure integrity throughout. They are not reliant on paper trails or packaging but test the product itself, and they can test the integrity of the entire food chain at any point.

We ourselves use a proprietary methodology that creates 'fingerprints' using a complex mix of Trace Element testing and Stable Isotope Ratio Analysis (SIRA) that map and catalogue food origins on a hyper granular level – right down to a specific field or farm anywhere in the world. Not only chemical parameters are used e.g. climatic, geological and geographical variables are also used to determine a more complete origin verification. Having this sort of system in place can additionally send a message to suppliers and act as a deterrent for fraudulent activities.

It is something that is very much supported by experts such as Professor Elliot who advocates that more food businesses should carry out clandestine scientific audits. He argues that auditing and verifying the provenance of food is a major step forward in helping businesses to protect their integrity and their reputations. John Ware, chief executive of the New Zealand Honey Company, confirms that. "We now have an audit regime in place that will test products from the shelf," he says. "It means customers can verify from an independent source that our product is genuine New Zealand Honey." Similarly, Silver Fern Farms, a multinational meat co-operative, is using proof of origin tests to demonstrate how seriously they take provenance to protect their brand against any fraud.

The more products that are authenticated the quicker we can close the loop on food fraud. And, by proxy, if more businesses can prove that a product does come from a site that is accredited, they are supporting fair trade, under going responsible resourcing and helping to put an end to slave labour.

In conclusion, food fraud is a massive issue that affects everyone across the supply chain. As more businesses make a stance and play their part in authenticating products, it makes it harder for fraudsters to operate and helps to make the complex food supply chain safer for retailers and consumers. The more informed a business is about new technologies, the more successfully they can arm themselves against food fraud risks. These new technologies act as a barrier against fraudsters, putting the control back into hands of businesses and empowering them to take control of their reputations by ensuring provenance.

Science holds the key to revolutionising the way that we tackle food fraud – and putting a stop to this criminal activity will not be so much down to the 'boys in blue', but instead to teams of scientific men and women in white lab coats.

> "Food fraud is a massive issue that affects everyone across the supply chain"





TIME TO **CHILL**

We speak to four temperature controlled packaging professionals to discover the best products to suit your needs

Getting products out to your customers in good condition is a lifeline for a food business, and there are number of factors to take into consideration when considering which temperature controlled packaging option you should invest in.

Firstly, the main practical purpose of the packaging: that the item in question gets to their destination in perfect condition. In order for this to happen, you have to ensure that the temperature controlled packaging will be able to maintain its temperature for the duration of transit. Depending on the location of your customers, this could be a question of under 20 or over 200 miles. The temperature controlled packaging will ideally be reasonably lightweight, too – to avoid unecessary expense. Some businesses may wish to go down the eco-friendly route, in which case there are options available for them as well.

Here, we speak to some of the biggest names in temperature controlled packaging today to see what solutions they offer, why their product will make the difference between foodie success and failure, and what the future holds for chilled and frozen food transportation.

Hydropac's 3D Reflective Air Liners embody 'Less Packaging' says Colin Rowland, business manager at Hydropac

Hydropac are the UK's premier ice and gel pack manufacturer, specialising in temperature controlled packaging solutions to the food and pharmaceutical industry.

Hydropac's latest new product development, the 3D Reflective Air System, when combined with a double strength corrugated outer carton, provides comparable temperature results when compared to its closest competitors; polystyrene and foam based systems.

Benefits and differentiators:

- 'Minimum' 24hr solution chilled or frozen, has achieved 54hrs on a full mid-summer test profile.
- One piece system, simple to assemble with a self-seal closure
- Leak resistant, wipe clean and multi-trip potential
- High grade bubble cushioning, combined with foil laminate for increased emissivity values
- 92% reduced storage requirement, based on the same size polystyrene or foam systems (26 pallets vs 2.14)
- 4 standard stock sizes
- MOQ 50 bags or systems
- Low cost system, bespoke sizes available for just 2,500
- Next day delivery available

Colin Rowland, business manager at Hydropac says, "We are continually developing new products and thrashing out new concepts, and dependant not simply on whether they actually perform, but whether they offer the market key benefits and differentiators".

Colin goes on to say, "With the 3D Reflective Air Bag; so-called





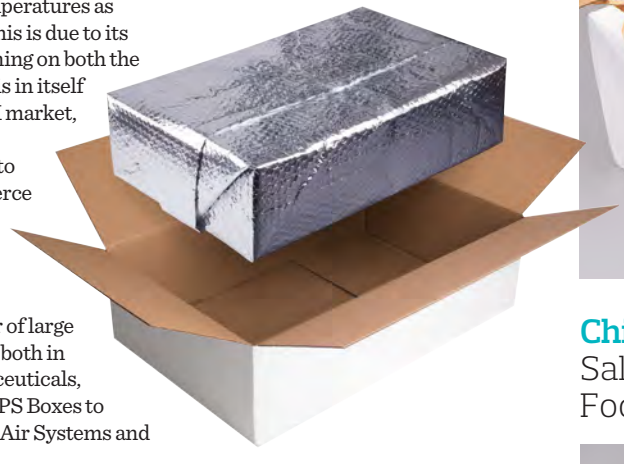


because it is designed and shaped to fit a conventional box, unlike a conventional and messy non-gusseted bag, the system offers a no-nonsense, hassle-free assembly, no fiddly two or three pieces to find and assemble or bulky EPS boxes, further reducing the impact on customers storage and labour, with a pallet-busting 700 bags per pallet potential from our stock sizes.

"The system works on emissivity/ thermal reflection of energy from both external temperatures as well as internal, this is due to its aluminium foil lining on both the inside and out, this in itself is a first to the UK market, with a one-piece system and is set to take the e-commerce market by storm."

Hydropac have successfully secured a number of large clients in the UK, both in food and pharmaceuticals, switching from EPS Boxes to the 3D Reflective Air Systems and have proven beneficial in reducing the impact on storage, transport costs, cashflow and weight to landfill comparables.

Colin adds, "The classier, reflective, quality looking design of the 3D Reflective Air System provides a unique, gamechanging set of aesthetics to the current dull, age old systems currently available, providing a more unique, upmarket experience for the end user. You just have to bold enough to be different."





> "We are continually developing new products and thrashing out new concepts, and dependant not simply on whether they actually perform, but whether they offer the market key benefits and differentiators"
>
> **COLIN ROWLAND, BUSINESS MANAGER AT HYDROPAC**

Chill out for longer with KB Packaging

Sally Greaves of KB Packaging talks Speciality Food through the company's ice pack offering



For over 30 years KB Packaging in Ilkeston, Derbyshire has been providing innovative packaging solutions to customers. However, in recent years the business has started to focus on a specialist range of temperature controlled packaging.

Our KB Gel Ice Packs can be used to keep fresh fish, cheese, meats and ready meals chilled for longer over bigger travelling distances and, being lighter than the traditional method of packing with ice, we're helping to save money on distribution costs too.

Ed Pearse, sales manager at KB Packaging said, "2017 was a great year for sales of our KB Gel Ice Packs. We grew this product by an astonishing rate of 600% and in 2018 we plan to grow this again by a further 200%. January 2018 has been a great start to the year with four new customers from across the country now placing orders with us."

CHILL OUT FOR LONGER

KB Packaging is delighted to introduce our own brand of KB Gel Ice Packs, an ice replacement system designed to keep products chilled for longer during transit. Like all the best ideas, KB Gel Ice Packs are a really simple concept. The product is a series of reusable gel ice packs that contain a specially formulated non toxic gel that's ready to be frozen and then used in application.

- KB Gel Ice Packs can be used to keep fresh fish, cheese and meats chilled for longer
- Weight and coolant comparison approx 2 times that of ice
- Lighter than ice - saves transport costs
- High grade, puncture-resistant film
- Conveniently stored in cartons or freezer trays ready to be frozen and reusable
- Clean with no mess; no seepage; no soaking required
- Available in the following sizes: 275g, 400g, 500g, 555g (2 fold), 680g and 800g (3 fold). Bespoke sizes also available
- Stored in our BRC approved warehouse









Contact us on: 0115 944 1600 to request your free sample or to place your order with the KB Packaging sales team. For more information please visit www.gel-pack.com or email ed@kbpackaging.com or reuben@kbpackaging.com

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT: GM POLYSTYRENE



If you're looking for a temperature controlled packaging supplier you can trust, you need to know about GM Polystyrene. Throughout its three decades in business it has supplied polystyrene boxes to all corners of the food industry – from fish and seafood to cheese, meat and raw produce. Quality customer service is key to Graham Middleton, MD. His approach will be familiar to independent retailers and producers: to make sure that his business keeps customers happy.

As well as offering a world-class service, he says, GM Polystyrene won't be beaten on price; a definite positive considering that the company can custom-make boxes of any size, length, width and depth. With a 24 hour delivery service UK-wide, and the fact that polystyrene keeps food items cool for around 48 hours, it's well worth considering polystyrene as an option for your temperature controlled packaging requirements.

Not only that, but as Graham explains, "Polystyrene is clean, lightweight and cheap to transport" – meaning that businesses don't need to worry about excessive transport costs dampening their bottom line.

It's interesting to note that despite popular opinion, polystyrene can be recycled. "We've been recycling polystyrene for 22 years," says Graham, "and are now one of the biggest recyclers of polystyrene in the UK." The business operates machinery which can prepare unwanted polystyrene packaging for recycling – offering one less thing to worry about for environmentally-conscious businesses.

KB Packaging has a dedicated team working on this area of the business as Reuben Birch joined the family business last year to work alongside Ed. Companies of all sizes are working with Ed and Reuben in sourcing the right temperature controlled packaging for their business. Reuben Birch, sales manager said, "Since joining the business I've been working with cheese and meat mail order companies as well as fish distribution businesses in Scotland. Our customer's products need to arrive at their end destination as fresh as possible to maintain their high standards of quality. Our KB Gel Ice Packs are helping to achieve this. As a family business we take a personal interest in our customers' success."

KB Packaging has a good range of Gel Ice Packs available in various sizes included celled sheets for the distribution of fresh fish. However, if a customer has a specific requirement then KB Packaging can produce a bespoke size if a certain quantity can be committed too. Unlike other products the KB Gel Ice Packs don't require any soaking; they are supplied ready to be frozen down and then used in application.

> "Our customer's products need to arrive at their end destination as fresh as possible to maintain their high standards of quality. Our KB Gel Ice Packs are helping to achieve this. As a family business we take a personal interest in our customers' success"
>
> REUBEN BIRCH, SALES MANAGER AT KB PACKAGING



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Sorba-Freeze ice packs and insulated packaging can open up the supply chain.



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✓ Gel formula of each cell guarantees extended transit time
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✓ Superior foil finish to reflect the high value of your product.
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Compact One box of Sorba-Freeze is equivalent to a full pallet of hydrated ice packs, freeing up valuable production space

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✓ Foil insulated envelopes: three stock sizes to create an insulation pocket separating chilled from ambient goods during delivery



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MEET THE PRODUCER

Proudly flying the flag for premium ready meals for almost a decade, Lodge Farm Kitchen's managing director, Louisa Stout, explains how consumers have officially warmed up to frozen food

The sweet aroma of onions sizzling away in a pan, the sound of a knife on the chopping block, the hurly-burly of cooks conversing about a particular dish: these are the unmistakable hallmarks of kitchen life. And they're also the core elements that are part of the DNA at Lodge Farm Kitchen. "In our kitchen you can see and smell the food," explains Louisa Stout, managing director of the premium frozen food company. "The meals aren't made in a factory where it's all pipes and what have you. Our ingredients come in covered in mud. We wash, chop and peel them, just like you would at home – our cooking process is exactly the same. When we make a beef bourguignon, we start off by sweating down the onions, browning the meat and putting it all together like you would do yourself."

The ethos and methods upheld can be traced all the way back to the origins of Lodge Farm Kitchen, which was formed nine years ago using the fresh ingredients from Louisa's kitchen garden in Herefordshire. "We started growing vegetables in the kitchen garden and would sell the surplus at the WI market," says Louisa. "We then started to sell fresh meals to local farmers' markets. The business rapidly started to grow, so I started to work with local farmers and producers to make the meals. I was doing that all from a kitchen on our farm. We went on to convert a stable on the farm into a kitchen and I worked from there for around five years, and then three years ago we moved into a commercial kitchen." The company is rightfully proud of its close relationship with suppliers, sourcing high welfare meat like their beef from just 10 miles away in Ledbury and free-range chicken from their home county of Herefordshire.



An extended workforce has only helped to perfect the fare, with the company continuing to provide its customers with convenient, tasty and nutritious frozen meals that are all hand-prepared and made from fresh, locally sourced seasonal ingredients whenever possible. The range currently includes the likes of Creamy Chicken Pie, Beef Moussaka and Squash Curry with Coconut & Fresh Coriander, with the classic dishes proving the most popular. "We listen to our customers a lot," Louisa continues. "What we have found is that the comfort food dishes, like the Cottage Pie & Fish Pie, are the ones which sell best."

As well as satisfying demand for the classics, the company caters for growing trends with brand new products set to be released in the spring, some of which will be gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan. The foray into free-from was not only borne from a desire to cater for consumers with restrictive diets, but also as a response to the growing demand for quality frozen convenient meals. Louisa notes that the hackneyed 'inferior quality' image of frozen food is finally fading away, as consumers are typically more knowledgeable when it comes to the benefits of freezing food – how it locks in nutrients and removes the need for adding preservatives or additives.

In order for the meals to retain all of their goodness and nutrients the company invested in a walk-in blast freezer. The equipment – "when you open the door it's like a scene out of David Attenborough's Frozen Planet!" – freezes the food within 90 minutes, which means that all of the nutrients, colours and textures are retained. "We want people to use their freezer just the same as they would their fridge," explains Louisa. "When you buy frozen produce it's in the same state as if I cooked it and served it on the table right in front of you. Whereas with a chilled product, the minute it's on the shelf it starts losing its quality."

As well as with a new range of products on the horizon, the company is also set to make some big changes when it comes to its packaging and is working towards using materials that are 95% compostable by the end of 2018 by increasing the use of poplar trays across its range. The company currently uses huge compost bins and has a wormery at the farm for all green and brown waste. Staff also recycle all tins, card, glass and plastic.

The company proudly supplies delis, farm shops and garden centres across the country. "We eschew franchises but instead prefer to present our customers with quality local produce, which is why we selected Lodge Farm Kitchen for the opening of our Gloucester Services in 2014," says Alexander Evans, farm shop buyer at the Westmorland Family group. "Since then we have doubled our freezer space at Gloucester to meet demand and as John from the company agreed to personally deliver to our sites at Tebay and Penrith, we continue to see the sales grow."



> "Our ingredients come in covered in mud. We wash, chop and peel them just like you would at home"





BREAKING THE ICE

Frozen food is shedding its unflattering image with ongoing premiumisation, eclectic flavours and savvy PR helping to revive the sector

The frozen food retail sector has hit an impressive £6bn mark for the first time ever, according to statistics provided by Kantar Worldpanel. The analysts state that the sector is growing at 5.4% a year, with growth being seen across a number of categories – music to ears of many, as the market was experiencing a -0.6% decline towards the end of 2016.

The figures also show that growth throughout the sector has accelerated since January 2017 due to an increase in product premiumisation across a range of categories, as well as more regular purchases as consumers are heading to the frozen food aisle more frequently and incorporating frozen products into their daily diet. "Hitting the £6bn mark is a huge milestone for the frozen food industry and is a demonstration of the talent and innovation that exists in the sector," says John Hyman, chief executive of the British Frozen Food Federation. "A lot of work has been done in communicating the benefits of frozen food to consumers, with focused and innovative marketing campaigns from brands and retailers contributing significantly to the change in consumer perceptions that we've seen in recent years."

Hyman points to a more educated consumer, especially when it comes to the health and quality aspects of frozen, as to why the industry is experiencing strong growth. "Consumers are much more tuned-in to the benefits of frozen food, including waste reduction, convenience and health and are discovering the breadth of choice in high-quality, on-trend products that are available to them with little preparation at home. Consumers are responding to the increased choice of premium products on offer in the frozen aisles and this has contributed to this value milestone."

Fishy business

One segment of the frozen food industry that is out-performing the sector considerably in growth is fish, which takes 13.5% of the market share and is up 6.9%. JCS Fish, one of the UK's leading seafood companies and owner of the BigFish Brand, has seen the demand for frozen quality fish grow. "Over the past 12 months we have doubled sales of BigFish Brand, so our faith in frozen seems to be justified!" explains Louise Coulbeck, founder and director of JCS Fish.

BigFish Brand specialises in a range of premium frozen salmon and trout products, which come in a variety of flavoured and plain fillets, goujons and bites. Louise believes that the brand's high-quality, flavourful and convenient credentials are resonating with consumers, who are starting to re-evaluate their perception of frozen foods. "We certainly feel the tide has turned on frozen, which is at last shedding its old reputation for poor quality, budget products," she



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says. "Instead, people are realising that frozen can be the ultimate in convenience, as well as a great way to cut out food waste. The format works perfectly for BigFish Brand, which is all about putting top quality food on the table with the minimum of fuss. All of our frozen products cook straight from the freezer – you can put together a healthy, delicious meal in as little as 20 minutes or use our fillets as the basis for a whole range of dishes."

Farmhouse frozen

For retailers looking for frozen ready meals that cover the entire meat spectrum, as well as veg-centric dishes, look no further than Lodge Farm Kitchen. Founder Louisa Stout believes that the tide has turned when it comes to the unfavourable perception of frozen food of old. "When you have big companies like Waitrose and Marks & Spencer promoting the notion of frozen food being high quality, the phrase 'a rising tide lifts all ships' comes to mind," she explains. "We benefit from that. People do need educating on frozen food still, though, as it's not very well understood. It's considered a cheaper option, but in actuality, it's not. The old perception of frozen food is that it's just cheap fish fingers. I don't know if it's well known but frozen peas are actually better than fresh, as they're picked and frozen within minutes, you couldn't eat them as fast as they're frozen. That's exactly what we do: cook our food fresh, take it out of the pan and freeze it instantly, keeping all of the goodness intact."

There were myriad benefits to why Lodge Farm Kitchen transitioned from chilled to frozen, but it primarily came down to a growing demand for Louisa's premium ready meals. "We went over to frozen as the business grew," says Louisa. "I was working on my own and I just couldn't keep up. I had to turn to freezing the meals because it meant that I could meet the demand. It's the best way of preserving food. I didn't want to start using preservatives or additives as the business grew, so the next best way of preserving things is to freeze it."

Karen Deans, managing director of field fare, talks to us about how frozen food is now in favour:



"It's a very exciting time for frozen food with 60% of consumers now believing frozen is of equal quality to fresh, according to research carried out by The Grocer. This is great news as for many years frozen has been seen as the poor relation, which is no longer the case! There are now many more interesting, high-end products that have clear provenance being launched into the fine food industry.

This is particularly true of field fare, as we work closely with a cluster of long-established, trusted, independent manufacturers and producers to source the freshest and finest produce for our entire range.

Our ready meals have seen fantastic growth since our brand relaunch. We use 25% more meat than rival brands, the meals are cooked in small batches with the same richness of flavours and quality ingredients that you would use in a home-cooked meal. So we are proud to put the field fare name to them, and together with our extensive existing range, make field fare a one-stop-shop for frozen!"

UK FROZEN FOOD INDUSTRY: AT A GLANCE

- Growing at 5.4% a year
- Reached a record £6bn in 2017
- Frozen veg recorded a growth of 7.2%
- Frozen fish recorded a growth of 6.9%

"Embracing frozen food is seen to be more sustainable"

Joanna Devenish, co-founder at Gourmade, explains how the brand wants to dispel the 'snobbish' preconception surrounding frozen and ready meals:

"Consumers today have no desire to compromise on taste. That's why we set about creating a range of premium, frozen ready meals to provide a high quality alternative to meals made at home from scratch. We want to reinvent this notoriously bland sector for the UK's time-starved nation. To make a 'proper' lasagne from scratch is really time consuming. With Gourmade you can have convenience, top quality ingredients and great taste. We also want to dispel the 'snobbish' notion around frozen and ready meals.

Focusing on a positive message about reducing food waste can also help to shake off negative connotations. Embracing frozen food is seen to be more sustainable. This also links to the concept of meal prepping – as the trend for health and wellbeing continues, consumers are preparing meals for the week to help with diet and portion control.

Gourmade offers a truly guilt-free alternative. We only use exceptional ingredients and there are no nasties to fear, so each dish tastes amazing. It's a no brainer for those that want to make every second of their day count. You can never have too much time on your hands and Gourmade enables you squeeze out a few more hours – and have a sensational meal at the end of it."

> "We want to reinvent this notoriously bland sector for the UK's time-starved nation"



MEET THE PRODUCER

From Grimsby docks to your plate, BigFish Brand's range of premium fillets, goujons and bites are healthy, delicious and ready in minutes







Not all shops have the luxury of boasting a fresh fish counter. However, that's not to say that retailers can't accommodate their customers' requests for quality fish. BigFish Brand is a company that has built an esteemed reputation for producing quality and flavoursome frozen fish products with a focus on responsibly-sourced salmon. "BigFish Brand is a perfect way for mid-market retailers, farm shops and independents to increase their seafood range in a manageable way," explains Louise Coulbeck, founder and director of BigFish Brand. "Our products are tasty and get high-repeat purchase, they have a long shelf-life and the packaging ensures there is no cross-contamination. With its distinctive packaging, the brand has great standout potential in the freezer. We have many long-standing customers for whom it has proved an ideal way to offer their customers more healthy fish products without investing in a fish counter or dealing with the wastage issues of fresh."

From individually wrapped organic, smoked and flavoured varieties of salmon and sea trout fillets that cook straight from frozen in just a few minutes to breaded goujons and bites, BigFish Brand's range focuses on an eclectic array of quality and exciting products. Variety is the main reason why Louise set up BigFish Brand, as she saw potential in creating novel ways to help people eat salmon more regularly. "It's such an under-utilised fish," she explains. "But it's readily available year-round with a secure supply chain, and being a species rich in Omega3, also a perfect fit with the growing consumer demand for healthier proteins."

Keeping it in the family

JCS Fish, the parent company of BigFish Brand, was formed in 2000 by Louise and her husband Andrew. "We were looking for a new challenge and the company grew naturally out of our previous involvement in Grimsby fish businesses," she explains. "Andrew had so much knowledge and experience with salmon that a new venture focused on that species just felt like a natural step."

After serving the foodservice industry for years, the couple quickly saw the potential for a specialist salmon brand in the retail market, so they launched BigFish Brand in 2009. Since then the brand has gone from strength to strength. In fact, over the past 12 months it has more than doubled its volume of sales. Being a close-knit family business is key to this upwards trajectory, Louise believes. "We have a highly motivated team in Grimsby who support each other and everyone is passionate about JCS Fish and BigFish Brand," she explains. "We think this motivates us to be the very best, and it's the reason why we've been so successful in growing the business year on year."

As well as being a family-run business, another integral element comes down to the company's location. "Grimsby is the centre of the UK seafood processing sector, as well as a major frozen food hub," says Louise. "Although we buy our salmon direct from producers rather than the local fish market, the town has more seafood industry experience than anywhere else in the UK, and this is really useful as we seek to grow our business. Grimsby is part of our DNA, since both Andrew and I were born locally and come from fishing and fish processing family backgrounds!"

Golden crumb

The latest additions to the range are six varieties of breaded Bites and Goujons that are made from premium salmon fillet, coated in golden breadcrumbs in either plain or Lemon & Pepper or Chilli & Lime flavours. All of the range cook from frozen in minutes, which makes them ideal for customers wishing to put together speedy family-friendly lunches or midweek meals. "BigFish Brand Breaded is aimed squarely at boosting the role of seafood in the fast-growing breaded product market," she says. "Seafood has a long way to go to catch up, as chicken has seen substantial growth in bite-size, fillet or mini-finger type products. However, more adults are eating fish fingers than ever before, but beyond them, seafood offers very few alternatives in this area. This is a major opportunity for our breaded range, which perfectly answers a clear consumer demand."

> "We are a friendly, family business and we love to meet people and demonstrate how enthusiastic we are about what we do"

Catch up

Business owners and buyers who are interested in experiencing the range for themselves are encouraged to pay the team a visit at this year's Food & Drink Expo, which takes place at the NEC Birmingham from the 16th until 18th April. "This provides a great opportunity for us to talk face-to-face with the industry about the advantages of stocking more frozen salmon," says Louise. "Our range of Omega-3-rich salmon products are totally in tune with consumer demand for healthier eating coupled with convenience."

The team will be showcasing its entire range, including its organic lines and its latest products. "We'll be cooking and preparing our products on the stand and visitors will be able to sample our entire range," Louise tells us. "Because we are a relatively small company, shows like the Food & Drink Expo are brilliant for meeting customers old and new and showing them our products first-hand. We are a friendly, family business and we love to meet people and demonstrate how enthusiastic we are about what we do."



Last Words

The final word on fine food

THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Nigel Barden, stalwart of the fine food scene and judge of the upcoming Q Guild Butchers Awards, tells us about the independent food and drink shops he couldn't live without



In my role as chairman of judges for the Farm Shop & Deli Awards, I've been lucky enough to visit some of the UK's great food and drink retailers. Keelham Farm Shop rates as one of the finest, based at the family's original farm in Thornton near Bradford, and more recently a second outlet in Skipton. Siblings Victoria and James Robertshaw have done a truly magnificent job and there's no need to visit a supermarket ever again if you have a Keelham on your doorstep.

Other brilliant retailers are Anthony and Sue Johns of the Johns of Instow and Appledore delis, which are located either side of the Taw and Torridge estuary on the north Devon coast. Ardross Farm Shop in Fife is another great example of how enterprising farmers have utilised the produce from their own land to form the bedrock of a successful shop. A smaller talented retailer is Fiona Kay of Cheese Please in Lewes. Greengrocers need to be supported, and Rafters in Driffield and the tardis-like Andreas in Chelsea are both at the top of their game. Sadly, we don't have enough fishmongers, but Ramus of Harrogate and Ilkley illustrate how, as an island race, it's possible to have fabulous fish on the slab. Helpful, well-trained staff make it a pleasure shopping in these outlets and the bulk of produce is sourced locally whenever possible, resulting in far fewer food miles than a national retailer.

On my BBC Radio 2 cookery slot with Simon Mayo, I've been fortunate to showcase top-class produce from gifted retailers.

We still have a number of excellent butchers in the UK, with Danny Lidgate doing a brilliant job taking over the reins from his rugby-playing father David at Lidgates in London's Holland Park. David was a great second row for Wasps and a former Q Guild of Butchers President.

The man currently holding that title is David Lishman and his charcuterie cries out for a detour to his shop in Ilkley. At my local butchers, Eastwoods of Berkhamsted, David and Sarah Bunting offer a marvellous service. Arthur Howell in Norfolk's Wells-next-the-Sea has his own abattoir at the back of his shop on the main street. Brace of Butchers in Poundbury, Meat NW5 in London and Cunningham's in Northern Ireland represent the funkier new-style butchers. It's easy to find a local butcher with traditional skills and great quality produce by looking for butchers in the Q Guild, and it's great to see this championed at the Smithfield Awards.

TWITTER POLL

Is your business as environmentally friendly as it could be?

- Yes 23%
- No, but we're working on it 69%
- We've not given it much thought 8%

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FARM SHOP & Deli SHOW
16-18 April 2018 NEC Birmingham

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- Food & Drink Expo Preview
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- Coffee
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TALKING SHOP

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How often does a wolf in sheep's clothing ever come knocking on your deli's door? While they probably won't huff and puff and blow your shop down, big brands using terminology typically synonymous with the speciality food market are increasingly looking to capitalise on the attention the products stocked in your shop are getting.

As a purveyor of produce that no doubt needs to qualify for a certain set of criteria to attract your customers – e.g. high quality, local provenance, interesting ingredients or flavours – it is tricky to ascertain how 'craft', 'artisan' or 'small batch' a company's credentials are nowadays. The usage of the aforementioned terms has been so rampant over the last few years that some naughty marketeers have rendered them redundant.

This subject of authenticity has been brought about by the recent gin resurgence, or more specifically, the use of the term 'hand-crafted' in the gin sector. While the industry has no doubt been propelled by an influx of expertly-created and fantastic quality bottles produced by genuine 'mother's ruin' distillers, consumers are beginning to sniff out the big brands masquerading as small, 'artisan' producers. Unfortunately for gin, due to it typically taking less time to produce than spirits like whisky, it's an easy target for big brands looking to make a quick buck.

The fine food industry is no doubt fed up to the back teeth with major brands and manufacturers developing a smaller brand in order to appear more wholesome or small-scale to appeal to consumer demand. It wasn't too long ago that there was collective outcry from independents when chain cafés and the like adopted the term 'deli' to illustrate that they were serving cooked food. Unfortunately, the deli branding has become even more widespread, and now one would be accused of pedantry for pointing out the differences between a genuine delicatessen stocking fine food, and a food-to-go deli establishment serving jacket potatoes and pizza by the slice.

Another example of the big boys cynically misleading consumers is the 'fake farms' debacle from a year or so ago. Thankfully for farm shops and other smaller retailers, the National Farmers Union was quick to lambast Tesco and the host of other multiples selling products with fake farm branding, and formally complained to Trading Standards over the usage. However, that is just one case of a representative of an industry that had the time and resources to investigate the issue, and while Tesco in particular has received plenty of criticism in the national press and social media, it's still continuing to sell its fake farm-branded produce.

This leads us to ask: is your business inundated by requests from companies whose products are heavily adorned with these buzzwords and terms? And how do you sniff out whether it's an international corporation in disguise? We'd love to know.

james.fell@aceville.co.uk

> "The fine food industry is no doubt fed up the back teeth with major brands and manufacturers developing a smaller brand in order to appear more wholesome or small-scale"

WHAT'S IN OUR BASKETS



JAMES, DEPUTY EDITOR



Pollen + Grace

When exploring the ready meals sector for an article included in this issue, I was pleasantly surprised by the sheer quality and variety of convenience products currently available. I stumbled upon Pollen + Grace and its range of delicious lunch boxes and breakfast pots. A personal favourite of mine has got to be the Butternut Squash and Coconut Daal pot, which is really creamy and satisfying, and contains chard, Ayuverdic spice blends and plenty of other tasty, healthy ingredients.

pollenandgrace.com



I Love Snacks

Seriously though, who doesn't? These handy little snack packs are invaluable for when hunger strikes. Got a major case of elevenses? Reach for the Smoked Almonds. Need something to pep you up before a workout? The Gently Dehydrated Mango bites will do the trick. And with five different options available, including Natural Italian Olives, Dehydrated Baby Pineapple and 70% Cocoa Dark Belgian Chocolate, there's a flavour to suit most occasions.

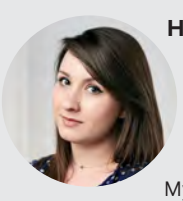
Ilovesnacks.co.uk

Adam's Chocolate



This British-based producer has just launched a new range of two-cube pocket-sized packs for its Goji Berry & Pistachio and Mint flavours. The smooth and velvety fudge-like texture of the organic cold-pressed chocolate works really nicely with the the goji berries, which provide a tart kick while the pistachio offers up a satisfying crunch.

adamschocolates.com



HOLLY, EDITOR



Moulins Mahjoub

I was completely enamoured of this range of Tunisian sauces when I first tried them. My favourite has got to be the Tebourba – named after a village in Northern Tunisia's Medjerda Valley – which includes tomatoes, artichokes, harissa, black olives and Tunisian spices. I can't wait to use it in my next shakshuka, or in an exotic pasta dish.

EDITOR'S PICK

artisanoliveoilcompany.com

DIARY DATES

February

14th–17th
BIOFACH
Nuremberg, Germany
biofach.de

18th–22nd
GULFOOD
WTC, Dubai
gulfood.com

21st
CRESS CONNECTS
Hertfordshire
thecressco.co.uk

21st–22nd
CASUAL DINING
The BDC, London
casualdiningshow.co.uk

22nd
CRESS CONNECTS
Manchester
thecressco.co.uk

24th–4th
PARIS INTERNATOINAL AGRICULTURAL SHOW
Paris Expo, Porte de Versailles
en.salon-agriculture.com

25th–28th
CHEESE & DAIRY PRODUCTS SHOW
Paris, France
ensalon-fromage.com

26th–11th
FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT
Nationwide
fairtrade.org

March

1st
CRESS CONNECTS
Perth Racecourse, Scotland
thecressco.co.uk

BORSA VINI
Landing 42, London
extraordinaryitaliantaste.co.uk



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