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SPECIALITY FOOD

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS



FOOD CONSULTANT

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the September issue of *Speciality Food*, where you find us getting into the swing of the 'new normal'.

After last year's myriad of unprecedented challenges, we couldn't be more excited to dive back into the world of trade shows – you'll find previews of the upcoming lunch! and Speciality & Fine Food Fair within this issue – and classic Christmas fare such as celebration-worthy drinks, chutneys and pickles to add punch to your shelves, and the ultimate cheeses to stock to help your customers create their best-ever festive cheeseboards.

Alongside this issue we have published *Café Buyer*, our annual stock-take of the foodservice sector, where you'll find a plethora of stocking recommendations including hot and cold drinks and food products, as well as profiles of some of the fine food sector's most exciting new launches and brands, and features exploring the future of indie cafés.

I hope you find them both valuable and enlightening reads.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR
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The bricks and mortar comeback begins

After the sharp spike in online sales seen during the lockdown period, *Speciality Food* discovers an optimistic outlook for physical shops post-Covid

After many months of lower-than-average footfall, the removal of Covid-19 restrictions has led to a revival in shopping at brick and mortar stores. Across all retail destinations, Springboard's data showed footfall rose by 1.4% during the first week of August, following growth of 2.4% the previous week, as shoppers got out and about during the summer holidays. High streets recorded strong figures, with activity up 2.6%, and coastal towns, cities and market towns all saw rises in footfall. It was Central London that welcomed the highest figures, however, with footfall in the city up 6.1%.

The gap in footfall from 2019 continues to narrow. "What is encouraging is that in the same week in 2019 – the pre-Covid baseline that we are now comparing footfall against – footfall declined; so, whilst the increase may only be a modest one, it is a significant improvement on what would be regarded as normal trading conditions two years ago," said Diane Wehrle, marketing and insights director at Springboard.

Online spend slows

With marked improvements in footfall, home delivery expert ParcelHero predicted that post-Covid shopping habits will see e-commerce levelling out at around a quarter of all retail sales. While the figure is a significant fall from the high recorded in February, it is a big increase on the 19% market share of online sales pre-pandemic. "For some months now, retailers have been trying to guess what the new normal will look like. We believe the picture has now become a lot clearer," said ParcelHero's head of consumer research, David Jinks. Indeed, Kantar's data for the 12 weeks to 8th August found the proportion of grocery sales taking place online had fallen as shoppers were more confident returning to physical shops. "Online sales have been falling every month since March, but not at such a rate as to indicate shoppers have abandoned their new online spending habits," David said. "As a result, everyone has been trying to assess the new 'natural order' and it's looking like online will permanently secure around a quarter of all retail spending," he said.

The 'experience economy'

At this rate, e-commerce still provides an attractive proposition for retailers, but bricks and mortar shops remain at the heart of the fine food industry. And according to research by Supercharged Commerce, physical shops are important to consumers, too. Three in five shoppers think it's important for brands to have a physical store as well as an online presence, the research found.

"Now restrictions have lifted, UK consumers have more freedom than they did 12 months ago, and, in many cases, they actually miss the physical shopping experience – particularly younger people," said Tim Edwards, founder of Supercharged Commerce. In order to win new customers in this environment, Tim told *Speciality Food* that independents must provide shoppers with a superior experience. "With many people unable to take a holiday abroad for a second year in a row, customers are increasingly wanting more when it comes to experiences on UK soil. In many cases, people are spending the money they would have spent on a trip abroad on experiences back home," Tim said. "This is great news for fine food retailers as they can often offer some of the culinary experiences customers would traditionally expect on holiday." Themed food packages or tasting experiences offer customers something in addition to their weekly shops and create a point of difference from the big supermarkets.

The research from Supercharged Commerce also found that shopping at independent retailers was on the rise. Of those surveyed, 28% said it was more important for them to shop at independent retailers than it was 12 months ago. Tim said fine food shops should shout about their local heritage – and keep this message consistent across all channels, "whether that's in store, online, on social media and even in how employees are trained to talk about the business to customers," he said. Ensuring consistency also means taking a keen eye to your entire omnichannel experience – from website and deliveries to in-store merchandising. "If you've always offered a luxury in-store experience but your online food box turns up on a customer's doorstep plain and slightly battered, it'll reflect badly on your brand. Instead, think about tying everything you're doing into one central brand, with a centralised look, feel and tone of voice," he said.

The future of bricks and mortar businesses is bright, and as more retailers up their game to take a slice of the 'experience economy', fine food independents can rely on their years of experience providing exceptional, personalised service, interactive tasting sessions and unrivalled food retail theatre.

> "In many cases, UK consumers actually miss the physical shopping experience"

Skoulikas Bedford
Continental Fine Foods

NEW

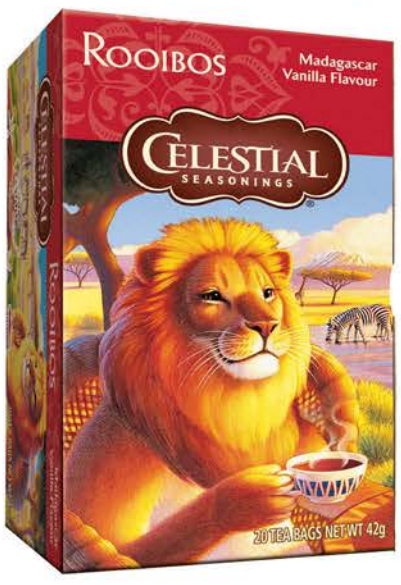
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"The summer punch"



JOHN SHEPHERD
PARTRIDGES

Room 101, Area 51, Route 66, Chapter 11 and Catch 22 have all gone down in social history as notable expressions and not necessarily with pleasant connotations. In a similar vein I would like to put forward a term with reference to selling speciality foods in Chelsea.

Step forward Week 33. Traditionally the worst week of the year in sales at Partridges, based on an experience of many years. In other words, it's mid-August. Surprisingly, takings in this period are often lower than anything the darkest days of January and February can throw at us.

It is particularly disappointing because theoretically the end of July and the beginning of August should be a high point of the speciality season. Deli products are scoffed, alcoholic beverages are quaffed and generally moods are aloft as the Dog Days of Summer draw to a close.

But here's the thing (and it's probably a town centre thing): there is a distinct absence of customers. They have nearly all gone away. Or at least 12-15% of them have. It is a situation worthy of a search party, but even I have gone away so I can't organise it. In truth, there is not much that can be done. Apart from getting the shop ready for the return of normality in September of course, and sorting out all the problems that get overlooked during busier times.

The sales decline has been particularly bad during the last two years, especially since Covid-19 has entered our lives. Prior to that the departure of regulars to sunnier climes has been somewhat mitigated by the arrival of irregulars such as tourists, event attendees and locals in need of a drink. However, that has mostly withered away in the firm grip of post-lockdown confusion.

This year there has also been a capricious thorn on the rose of summer trading. Those who do not wish to read another (probably exaggerated) weather commentary, please look away now. But this July has been particularly wet. Not just with London drizzle, but rain of nearly biblical proportions. Torrential rain has the same effect on our shop as an electrical blackout without the luxury of being able to do something about it. In July, due to inclement weather we had our worst Monday, Wednesday and Sunday on record, although fortunately in different weeks.

Last year was our worst combined July and August on record, and I was reasonably confident we would not plumb to those depths again. Sadly, we are yet again in the same place at the end of July, and Week 33 is still to come just around the corner. So far it's all been akin to a painful Summer Punch.

However, as with so many aspects of speciality food retailing there are highs and lows. Last year a disappointing summer was followed by a great Christmas and if truth be told, it is not really about the weather but it's the unpredictability of several situations at the same time. The Pingdemic, the holiday season, the difficulties of recruiting new staff and the unavailability of some products have all assisted the bad weather to make it a frustrating time.

We have of course been here before. The Chelsea Flower Show returns in September, we are upgrading our café and Food Gift area and improving our messaging around the shop. It is important to keep busy, and Week 33 will soon be a distant memory.

> "As with so many aspects of speciality food retailing there are highs and lows. Last year a disappointing summer was followed by a great Christmas, and if truth be told, it is not really about the weather but it's the unpredictability of several situations at the same time. The Pingdemic, the holiday season, the difficulties of recruiting new staff and the unavailability of some products have all assisted the bad weather to make it a frustrating time"

Speciality Food launches Sustainable Food Month

***Speciality Food* and Too Good To Go are teaming up to unveil a brand new sustainability initiative.**

Sustainable Food Month will launch in October to educate, inspire and support the food and drink industry to realise the potential of sustainability.

Speciality Food and anti-food waste app Too Good To Go have recognised that as one of the most important topics in the food industry today, sustainability deserves to be centre stage. The month-long initiative will shine a light on environmental achievements in the fine food sector and illuminate the ways that industry players can take responsibility for making the food industry a more sustainable place.

To register for updates, head to **sustainablefoodmonth.com**.

Ambient food producers with a passion for sustainability are also invited to take part in an opportunity to get their products in front of fine food retailers. Register at **sustainablefoodmonth.com/producer**.

Welsh lamb receives first protected status label



PHOTOGRAPH BY HUW JONES

Gower Salt Marsh Lamb has become the first new food product to receive Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status post-Brexit.

The new, independent Geographical Indication (GI) schemes were launched after the end of the transition period and are designed to ensure that popular and traditional products from across the country can obtain special status to prove their authenticity and origin.

The meat produced from lambs born and reared on the Gower Peninsula in South Wales has gained full protection and recognition as a PDO product. Producers demonstrated that their meat's characteristics are essentially and exclusively due to the particular area of production.

Gower Salt Marsh Lamb is produced with knowledge and skills that date back to medieval times. The meat has unique characteristics thanks to the specific vegetation and environment of the salt marshes on the north Gower coastline. Dan and Will Pritchard from Weobley Castle Farm, who produce Gower Salt Marsh Lamb, said the meat has a unique, local flavour of samphire and sea lavender. "This recognition means that the reputation of our regional product is protected, and it helps us promote traditional agricultural practices and eliminate non-genuine products," they said.

Food Minister Victoria Prentis said the new GI scheme guarantees quality and excellence for food lovers. "I am really pleased to see Gower Salt Marsh Lamb gain protected status, and I can think of no better product to kick-start our new scheme with," she said. "We want people, at home and abroad, to be lining up to buy British. I would encourage producers from all around the UK to apply to the scheme, so that we can celebrate and protect more of our excellent local produce, and ensure it is given the recognition that it deserves."



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"Why we should give back"



JANE MILTON
FOOD CONSULTANT

I run a food and drink strategy consultancy, collaborating with businesses to bring a new perspective to their challenges and introduce unique insight and inspiration to their creative processes.

In the last year I've been looking at how clear it is for others to see what my values are within the context of my business, as the clearer they are, the more likely it is that I will attract clients who align with them, and that makes it easier to work together. While doing an American workshop, they shared a statistic that small businesses in the USA give more $ to help others than larger companies do – not as a % of turnover but in cold hard cash – but they are far less likely to talk about what they give than larger multinationals and big brands. I have not been able to find an equivalent UK figure, but I am sure from what I see, this will be the case here too. So, I began to talk to clients, potential beneficiaries and to the wider food community about what they do.

Businesses are often reluctant to talk about what they as businesses give – in money, food, our skills and time – for fear that it will look like they are blowing their own trumpet. A client, Dilmah PLC, who I have discovered give back a minimum of 15% of their pretax profits to support a number of initiatives on issues from climate change, preserving culture, wildlife support, training people with disabilities to enable them to work, bursaries to enable access to higher education and much more, said, "We don't talk about it because we believe it is just something we should do, so it is not something we should draw attention to".

Younger Gen Z and Millennial consumers have in recent years led the way wanting to know about business values, how the money they give a business for their product is spent and the values that business has. During the last few years more consumers have become aware of the power of choosing where they spend their cash. If you don't talk about your business values and how that shapes your business is there a danger that your potential customers will think you have not given it any thought or commitment?

I had a conversation with Laura Winningham, the founder and head of strategic relationships at City Harvest London about this subject and she felt it was good if people will talk about who they have chosen to partner with and how they support charities through staff volunteering days, giving their skills in areas like IT, marketing and logistics, giving short shelf life or surplus product, or committing to give an amount of money, however small, for a period of time so the charity knows it can rely on that amount to cover a running cost, because by talking about it, other businesses may see how they could help in a way they had not previously considered.

I think it is important too that you find ways you can give back and support communities that are relevant to your business. If there is an authentic connection between your business and the people you support, your whole team will find it easier to get behind that. Whether there is a personal link with someone in the business, a team member highlights a local group they have heard about or whether you identify clubs, associations, schools, holiday clubs, etc, you can support either local to your own base or in areas where your biggest customer groups are, it is important to involve all your staff in who you support and how best you can pair up to support these initiatives.

I've chosen to share my thoughts on giving back because I want to help people realise that everyone has something they can offer and they can play a part in their community and give back too. To me, giving back is about using my skills and experience to give people who truly need it the support that could make a real difference. It's not always financial; sometimes it's the smallest thing, but being open to giving back can change lives, for both the giver and the recipient.

If we all share how we're giving back, maybe we can inspire each other to get involved, not for our benefit, but for the benefit of our communities and the businesses that support us all.

> "To me, giving back is about using my skills and experience to give people who truly need it the support that could make a real difference. It's not always financial"

Springvale acquires Hider's wholesale food business

Springvale Foods Ltd, one of the UK's leading speciality food distributors, has completed a deal to buy Hider Foods' secondary wholesale business. Springvale, which operates out of its two warehouses in Suffolk, currently supplies over 2,500 independent retailers across the UK.



The integration of Hider Foods' secondary wholesale business will rapidly increase growth for the family-run business, which was established in 1993. Springvale managing director Darran Goody said the takeover is part of the company's three-year strategy and is a significant step in enhancing its position in the speciality food industry. "We've invested heavily in our team, IT and operations to support this increased capacity. The whole team is ready; it's an exciting time for us," Darran said. "Being the second-generation founding owner, I'm extremely grateful to the Hider Family for what we have achieved together. Not only is it the right thing for the business but also the right time for Hider Foods; it creates an incredible opportunity to expand and grow their existing Hider brand into the Springvale customer base. In that regard, I couldn't be more pleased with the historical milestone we have achieved today," he added.

The deal follows Springvale's recent acquisitions of Mercia Foods and Moordale Foods' third-party wholesale division. "This further takeover demonstrates our commitment to investing and enhancing our offering to retailers," Darran said. "Whilst Hider Foods have faced some recent challenges, they have an extraordinary heritage that we want to protect, develop and grow. Springvale Foods have a proven track record for successfully integrating businesses." All existing Hider Foods customers were automatically transferred to Springvale Foods on 12th August.



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"The value of collaboration"



ANDY LAWSON
BOROUGHBOX

My personal experience of working in the food and drink industry is that it's an area where brands and producers, particularly SMEs, are more open to collaboration and supporting each other than any other I've experienced. Recent events have made it more important than ever for challenger brands to work together in attempts to make the best of any situation.

At BoroughBox we work with hundreds of SMEs of all shapes and sizes, and it's been heartening to see many of these producers working together to support each other and those in need in the 18 months since Covid hit. We've seen countless examples of producers uniting to help get their products to those that need, or deserve it. We were fortunate to also be able to play our part in this. Realising that we had stock that we could no longer sell due to the closure of hospitality, we reached out to producers who store products in our warehouse, asking if anyone had stock they'd like to donate. We saw overwhelming generosity, with a number of brands putting stock forward – much of it they could have easily sold through their booming online channels. We were eventually able to arrange for five pallets of incredible food and drink to be donated to NHS charities during the first lockdown, which made us extremely proud.

Many brands have also worked together to not just benefit those in need but also help reach new audiences. A great example of this is snack brand Olly's who led a collaboration with several different brands to create a mixed snack box that lucky customers could send to a loved one, who they couldn't visit, for free. Each producer involved knew that they were not just doing good by donating stock to someone in need but at the same time were able to introduce their products to a brand new audience who they otherwise may have been unable to reach.

Cross-promotional giveaways have also been common, with producers teaming up with like-minded brands to create and promote giveaways and competitions to each other's audiences on social media. Collaborations like this present fantastic opportunities for smaller brands to help one another and make marketing spend go further.

Craft beer has been an area where we've seen countless collaborations over the years, with breweries bringing their expertise together to create new drinks and interesting concoctions as well as working with other producers to create new, exciting flavours. You probably saw coverage of the Brewdog x Tony's Chocolonely raspberry and white chocolate IPA, but smaller brands have got in on the act as well. Leeds-based brewery Northern Monk teamed with Seabrook Crisps to create some crisp-flavoured beers to celebrate the recent opening of beer gardens.

As the world slowly returns to normal, or whatever the 'new normal' might be, I'm looking forward to seeing more collaborations between challenger brands as they support each other to maximise their limited marketing budgets. The larger brands have a much easier time hitting the headlines and getting eyes on their products, so the challengers in food and drink need to explore more innovative ways to work together to take on the big boys. I for one can't wait to sample a crisp-flavoured beer on my next trip to a beer garden!

Convenience is back on the menu for fine food retailers

After spending most of the last year working from home and cooking from scratch, convenience is in high demand when it comes to food and drink. The food to go market is making a rapid recovery, with IGD's analysts predicting it will return to its pre-Covid levels a full six months earlier than expected as shoppers pick up meals and snacks to eat on the go. The group forecasts that the food to go channel will be worth £15.6bn at the end of this year, and it will return to its pre-pandemic levels in the second half of 2022.

By 2026, the market will be worth £22.7bn which is 20.5% more than 2019, IGD predicts. Hospitality businesses will benefit from cooking fatigue, and demand for affordable luxuries will boost "destination" food to go sites. However, at the same time, retail's share of the food to go market is expected to drop to 21% from 24% in 2019. This will gradually increase back to 23% by 2026. Retailers must adapt to changing consumer behaviour in order to close the gap in market share.

As well as stocking convenience-led products that are tailored to a more discerning customer, such as grab and go food wrapped in sustainable packaging, high-quality ready meals that don't skimp on flavour and great tasting, good-for-you snacking options, to meet the renewed demand for convenience retailers can look to innovations around e-commerce and delivery. While part of the charm of shopping at an independent food and drink retailer will always be the time spent perusing shelves, exploring new products, discovering recommendations from staff members and learning the stories behind local fare, customers also increasingly want the products that they know and love to be easy to purchase from the comfort of their home. Thanks to a growing desire to support local shops, as convenience shopping makes a comeback, agile fine food retailers have the opportunity to win loyal customers through both their online and bricks and mortar stores.

THE **FOOD TO GO** CHANNEL WILL BE WORTH **£15.6BN** AT THE END OF **2021**

SOURCE: IGD

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Announcement

We are excited to announce the acquisition of Hider foods secondary wholesale business.
We will be distributing the range of Hider branded Nuts, Dried Fruit, Beans, Seeds & Confectionery along with over 3,000 existing speciality products.

7 facts to know about sustainability

With more and more consumers motivated to shop consciously, fine food retailers, wholesalers and producers all have an important role to play in offering sustainable options for their customers. *Speciality Food* looks at the latest data on sustainability trends to discover where the biggest opportunities lie.

1 RECYCLING IS A TOP PRIORITY FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSUMERS

The recyclability of food and drink packaging plays an important role in whether a consumer will pick up a product from the shelf. Indeed, the top three small actions consumers are personally taking to protect nature, according to Ecotone UK, are recycling more (78%), using less single-use plastic (61%) and eating less meat and dairy (32%).

2 SUSTAINABILITY IS THE FASTEST-GROWING PURCHASE CONSIDERATION

The number of people buying food and drink based on the product's sustainability credentials has spiked, rising 25% in the last two years, according to a report commissioned by Ecotone UK. Price and quality are still the biggest considerations when grocery shopping, but these have fallen over the past two years by 10% and 17% respectively. Two-thirds of consumers say they would pay more for sustainable goods in at least one category of groceries, according to the survey, and 40% of consumers consider themselves 'sustainable shoppers'.

3 COVID HAS BOOSTED DEMAND FOR GREEN FOOD AND DRINK

The pandemic has caused sweeping changes in consumers' shopping habits, and Covid-19 has influenced priorities around shopping sustainably, too. More than a third of consumers say Covid-19 and lockdown have given them more time to think about buying ethical and sustainable groceries, according to Ecotone's report. This was the same number of people who said they were prompted to shop sustainably by David Attenborough's documentaries.

4 THERE IS AN EDUCATION GAP IN SEASONAL PRODUCE

A poll from UK & Ireland Mushroom Producers has revealed that fewer than half of Brits know when some of the UK's most well-known fruit and vegetables are in season, despite 63% of those surveyed wanting to shop seasonally in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint. This offers retailers an opportunity to help customers understand when seasonal, local produce can be best enjoyed.

5 HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY ARE LINKED

For many consumers, the issues of 'healthy food' and 'good for the environment' are becoming synonymous, according to data and analytics company GlobalData. The group's consumer surveys found health and wellbeing were key drivers for purchases for 45% of UK consumers, while more than two-thirds of UK consumers found sustainably or ethically sourced ingredients appealing.

6 GREENWASHING REMAINS A PROBLEM FOR THE INDUSTRY

Greenwashing, when businesses make themselves look more environmentally friendly than they really are, will be a growing issue as more consumers demand greener products, warns Bryan Martins, marketing and category director at Ecotone UK. He said, "Supply chains must be made transparent, allowing shoppers to make informed choices about what they put in their baskets."

7 SUSTAINABLE DEMAND INSPIRES NEW PRODUCT LAUNCHES

Nearly half of all new coffee products that were launched in 2020 carried an ethical or environmental claim, nearly double the number from almost a decade ago. According to the Mintel Global New Products Database, the coffee sector is ahead of the total food and drink market, where just 35% of new product launches carry a sustainable claim in Europe, compared with 64% of coffee launches in the region.

NEWS IN BRIEF

FOOD PRICES SET TO RISE

Shoppers will face higher food and drink prices if manufacturers are made to absorb costs from Government policies, a report by the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) has warned. The group estimated that the price of food and drink shopping per household will rise by more than £160 per year. "Food and drink manufacturers are close to breaking point," said FDF CEO Ian Wright. "Through the last 16 months our workers have made truly heroic efforts to keep the country fed. Yet now they face a combination of challenges which threaten to deliver food price inflation to already hard-pressed households."

'PINGDEMIC' HITS RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY

Staff shortages due to Covid infections and self-isolation rules are impacting food retailers and hospitality venues. Nearly 75,000 retail staff were forced to self-isolate in July, according to data from FirstCare. The group found that retail has been the hardest hit sector, with absences due to self-isolation rising by 366% from May to 19th July. Emma Mosey of Minskip Farm Shop said her business would "hugely benefit" from the removal of self-isolation rules.



AS SEEN ON BBC THIS FARMING LIFE

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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

Naturelly releases reduced sugar jam range



Natural jelly producer Naturelly has announced the launch of its new Naturelly Sweet & Fruity Jam which contains added fibre and Omega 3 and no added sugar or sweeteners.

As well as looking to create a healthy alternative to conventional jam, the Naturelly team have had sustainability in mind when developing the range; the jams are made using surplus fruit and are presented in glass jars.

Dean Dempsey, founder of Naturelly, said, "We are extremely excited to make available our Naturelly Sweet & Fruity Jam that contain 37% less sugar than the market leader with the added nutritional benefits of fibre and Omega 3.

"It has taken us two years to create and we feel there is a clear gap for lower sugar, more nutritious jam in the preserves fixture."

naturelly.co.uk

'Better for you' chocolate launch

New chocolate brand Kyoot has entered the market, launching with three flavours of chocolate which promise a healthier alternative to conventional chocolate.



The bars contain no refined sugars, fake sweeteners, emulsifiers, palm oil or GMOs, and are available in Original, Crunchy Salted Caramel and Vanilla Quinoa Pops flavours.

The chocolate itself has been crafted by Belgian chocolatiers using sustainably sourced organic cacao grown by small-scale farmers in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon.

Noor Freiha, founder of Kyoot, said, "There was a clear gap in the market for a more youthful, engaging plant-based chocolate proposition with a clean label that doesn't compromise on quality and taste."

eatkyoot.com



Mermaid Gin innovates with RTD can format

Isle of Wight-based Mermaid Gin has launched its first ready-to-drink product: a canned blend of its award-winning gin paired with Indian light tonic.

As well as being 100% recyclable, the can is printed and plastic-free, and orders are dispatched to trade customers in plastic-free packaging.

Xavier Baker, co-founder of the Isle of Wight Distillery said, "After a brilliant response to the launch of the Mermaid brand and with people staying closer to home, enjoying staycations and local events, we decided now was the time to broaden Mermaid's reach.

"As with any RTD, this is perfect for those social, out-of-home moments – not just picnics and BBQs, it's also the perfect sundowner for beach or boat trips!"

isleofwightdistillery.com

New Panettones from Pasticceria Venezia



Pasticceria Venezia has revamped its classic panettone for the 2021 festive season, launching it in a mini 80g size using a recipe which is suitable for vegans.

The business is also launching classic, chocolate chip and gluten-free variants in 500g size.

Paul Garrod, managing director of Skoulikas Bedford said, "The Vegan Mini Panettone from Pasticceria Venezia will be a great addition to coffee shops and cafés in appealing to consumer's demands for traditional products that are vegan-friendly.

"Plus, you now don't have to miss out this Christmas if you are vegan or eat a gluten-free diet."

skoulikasbedford.co.uk



Island Bakery launches Sweet FA Gluten Free

Organic biscuit maker Island Bakery has announced the launch of a new brand: Sweet FA Gluten Free. Gluten-free, organic and suitable for vegans, the new products have been certified by the Coeliac Society, the Soil Association and the Vegan Society.

There are four variants in the range: Oat & Raisin Cookies, crisp and delicate with plump raisins and a touch of cinnamon; Peanut Butter Cookies, ideal for peanut lovers as they contain both peanut butter and peanut chunks; Cranberry & Orange, a fragrant combination of organic orange oil and sweet, tart cranberries; and Double Chocolate Chip, which combine crisp cookie with creamy dark chocolate chunks.

Dawn Reade, director of Island Bakery said, "We are delighted to bring the Sweet FA Gluten Free range to market. It's the perfect complement to the Island Bakery range as it offers something for the growing vegan and gluten-free markets."

islandbakery.scot



Carrot-based biscuits now ready to stock

Rootles has launched its reformulated and rebranded range of root vegetable-based biscuit snacks into the fine food market.

There are two flavours currently in the Rootles range: Dark Chocolate and Milk Chocolate. Both offer a nutritious alternative to conventional on-the-go biscuit packs as they are made using over 35% root vegetables including carrot and sweet potato, are high in fibre, and contain 120 calories per three-biscuit finger pack.

Helen Yates, director of Rootles, said, "The Covid pandemic has led to a greater focus on health, and Rootles are the perfect product for guilt-free snacking as they are high fibre and contain just 120 calories per pack – fewer than many other snack bars.

"Consumers are looking for healthier snacks, particularly in the impulse snacking sector, but they don't expect to compromise on taste or texture and still want to treat themselves. Veg has been added to cakes for a long time but we've taken the concept a stage further and developed biscuit bars using root vegetables.

"Rootles taste like a traditional chocolate biscuit but are naturally sweetened with carrot and sweet potato. They are deliciously unconventional and really have to be tasted to be believed!"

rootles.co.uk





New from Peter's Yard

Peter's Yard, the premium crispbread brand, has launched two new flavours into its range.

The two new launches – Rosemary & Sea Salt and Poppy Seed Crackers – are both certified as being suitable for vegans.

Matt Hodgetts, UK speciality sales manager at Peter's Yard, said, "These NPD launches are building on a successful year for the brand. Our 51% year-on-year sales growth has been driven by strong support from specialist retailers and shoppers trading up to premium under lockdown. 2021 first half sales show this behaviour continuing as restrictions ease."

petersyard.com

Celestial Seasonings Teas announces three new flavours

Celestial Teas, experts in herbal and wellness-focused teas, have added three new flavours to their All-Natural Tea range. The new flavours: Morning Thunder, Rooibos Madagascar Vanilla and Sleepytime Decaf Green Tea, are designed to cater to the increasing consumer demand for alternative hot drinks which provide healthy and functional benefits.

Paul Garrod, managing director of Skoulias Bedford said, "We have three new exciting All Natural flavours to add to the range, just in time for the increase in tea consumption as winter approaches. These are delicious, high-quality teas."

skoulikasbedford.co.uk





Fresh tapenades from The Real Olive Company

The Real Olive Company is launching two fresh, organic tapenades to complement its range of olives.

The Organic Kalamata Olive Tapenade is a rich and savoury blend made using intensely-flavoured kalamata olives with sundried tomatoes and aromatic cumin; while the sweet and smoky Organic Smoky Harissa Tapenade is created using tangy peppers, sundried tomatoes and smoked paprika. Both new products are versatile and can be used as a spread, accompaniment or flavour-booster in cooking. Karin Andersson, founder and marketing director of The Real Olive Company, said, "Our purpose 'to make life taste better by connecting people to the natural vitality of real food' guides us through all aspects of life and more so than ever when it comes to new product development.

"These new tapenades see us entering a new category, reaching a broader consumer demographic and furthering our mission to introduce more people to great tasting natural food."

therealolivecompany.co.uk





On the go packaging

Kite Packaging's new takeaway range is the perfect partner to all of your tasty treats



Kit out your business with our complete takeaway packaging range



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02476 420 065
kitepackaging.co.uk

Taylors of Harrogate showcases 2021 Christmas Coffee

Popular coffee makers Taylors of Harrogate have created a limited-edition coffee in order to mark the upcoming festive period.

The business's Christmas Blend has been expertly sourced and blended, and medium roasted to perfectly amplify the beans' milk chocolate and hazelnut flavours.

Kelly Wright, senior brand manager at Taylors of Harrogate, said, "At a time when we all like to indulge ourselves, this rich, warming coffee hits the festive bill deliciously."

taylorsofharrogate.co.uk



Wild Life Botanicals introduces canned format



Wild Life Botanicals, the Cornwall-based producer of low-alcohol sparkling wine drinks with additional health benefits, has expanded its range to include 250ml cans alongside its established glass bottles.

Available in Nude and Blush variants, the drinks contain 0.5% ABV and over 60% fewer calories than Prosecco and Champagne, as well as an 'uplifting elixir' of botanicals and eight active vitamins and minerals.

Ellie Bradshaw, founder of Wild Life Botanicals, said, "There's a real shift in the landscape and the low and no alcohol sector is a category in its own right that has mainstream appeal based on occasion, time of day, medical or lifestyle choice. Soft drinks will always have their place – but just because you don't want the alcohol why should choice or experience be compromised?

"We've seen exponential growth over the last year for our unique bubbles, securing new listings across the UK with retailers and hospitality venues that embrace the category as a whole and offer a comprehensive Low & No Alcohol BWS range. We are now excited to launch our new cans whilst also taking the unique concept of 'Bubbles with Benefits' to further markets across the world."

wildlifebotanicals.co.uk

4 new Nut & Sesame Butters from Sunita

Sunita has launched an exciting range of nut and sesame butters in four varieties in order to cater to the growing consumer demand for indulgent and internationally-inspired foods.

The range now includes Almond & Sesame, Cashew & Sesame, Cocoa & Sesame and four nut butter blends, all of which are all-natural and versatile at any time of day.

Paul Garrod, managing director of Skoulikas Bedford said, "This is a great time to be launching our new range, it's a twist on the normal products you find in the marketplace with consumers always looking for new and different products."

skoulikasbedford.co.uk





HOW TO SELL: CHRISTMAS 2021

After a tumultuous year, how will consumers shop this festive season? *Speciality Food* investigates

COMMENTATORS



MICHAEL FREEDMAN
IGD



NICK PUNTER
SUFFOLK FOOD HALL



JUDY ROBERTS
RIGHT PRODUCT, RIGHT PLACE

Nearly two years into the Covid pandemic, there are still plenty of question marks over how the UK will celebrate the upcoming festive season. While – as we've all learned – one can never be sure about future plans in the Covid era, it's looking as though we're set to enjoy a more 'normal' Christmas than we did in 2020; gatherings are likely back on the table (give or take a few guest list restrictions), and shoppers are primed to make an occasion out of it.

According to Michael Freedman, senior shopper insight manager at IGD, "The key influence in the run up to Christmas 2021 will be Covid-19. If there are renewed restrictions this winter because of a rise in cases, Christmas will look very different compared to a scenario where cases continue a downward trajectory with little or no restrictions. If we continue with no restrictions, IGD's ShopperVista insight shows that we can expect to see a return to Christmas 2019 and 'normality' for most consumers."

The good news is that "some 27% of shoppers say they expect Christmas 2021 to be bigger than normal," he says, "with this rising to 50% of 18–24-year-old shoppers (Jan '21), so it's likely that Christmas this year will see people coming together for larger celebrations, making up for lost time."

But how can independent fine food retailers cash in on this ever-moving feast? There are four key areas to consider:

Shopping style

Firstly, how will consumers want to shop? After a tough couple of years we're all craving something special, so some customers might appreciate fanfare and want retailers to create a glittering festive 'experience' around their visit. Bear in mind, though, that some will retain a 'safety first' mentality – these shoppers will appreciate convenience and ease of movement around the store. If you're unable to cater for 'get in, get out' shoppers, make sure your online platforms and delivery services are on point so they don't move their custom elsewhere. According to IGD's Michael, "Safety, while still important to shoppers, has become less of a priority as more restrictions have been lifted. IGD's recent food-to-go research shows that 85% of shoppers stated that Covid-safety measures were important in Q2 2021, compared to 92% in Q1 2021. The top consideration for food and grocery shoppers is a convenient store location with 56% citing this as their main reason for choosing a store (July 21)," explains Michael. "At the height of the pandemic in April 2020, the second highest store choice driver for shoppers was good choice and availability of products (43%) however this has decreased to 36% as more restrictions have lifted and shopper priorities have changed. Factors such as being able to save money and the store being quicker and easier have become more important than choice of products."

While product variety isn't a vital consideration for shoppers, the quality of the items they're buying is becoming increasingly key. "Product quality has also become a more important consideration for shoppers as shopper confidence and financial confidence has improved – the proportion of shoppers stating quality as a key consideration has increased from 27% in Q2 2020 to 31% in Q2 2021," Michael continues.

"Ever since restrictions have lifted (more over time, of course) we have seen a big return of customers to shopping in-store and enjoying their time in the Café, Restaurant and outside," says Nick Punter, marketing and design coordinator at Suffolk Food Hall, and he believes this momentum will continue throughout the Christmas period. The fact that the store offers a myriad of services – with a full-carcass butchery, artisan bakery, deli and fishmonger all under one roof – with expert staff being on-hand to answer any questions shoppers might have, is undoubtedly a boon that not all indies have. Something most if not all independents can consider implementing is a 'contactless collection' service; this has been of benefit to Suffolk Food Hall and its customers in recent times, "and more may want to use the service during the Christmas period because it is safe," says Nick.



> “Some 27% of shoppers say they expect Christmas 2021 to be bigger than normal, with this rising to 50% of 18–24-year-old shoppers (Jan ’21), so it’s likely that Christmas this year will see people coming together for larger celebrations, making up for lost time”

While other options are on the menu, Nick predicts that most customers will choose to indulge in the full retail experience in-store. “I believe that the majority of our customers will spend time in the store, browsing all the Christmas items, gifts, specialities and of course, hopefully placing their Christmas butchery orders all in good time too,” he says.

Smart display

Of course, display plays a huge part in the retail experience for customers regardless of their shopping style. Should you go all out, big and bold, to lead imaginations to cater for full-on feasts, or think small-scale to encourage small gatherings to be that little bit more special?

“In some ways we have learnt to be ready for anything,” says Judy Roberts of Right Product, Right Place. “So much of what we’ve had to cope with over the past year and a half has been new and we’ve had to learn on the hoof, as it were, in order to capitalise on the opportunities that were available. This period has been such a test of agility, and those smaller independent retailers who have been able to adapt their stock and service style to the new ways of working have survived and cemented themselves in the hearts and minds of their customer base.” The answer is to be adaptable and quick to cater for the demand as it stands at any given time. “This year I’m sure retailers will be hedging their bets and able to scale up or down to suit the requirement when we get our final instruction,” Judy says. How does this look in-store? “Having a range of meal options with smaller and larger joints, veg packs and dessert treats will ensure you are ready to weather the storm, and appeal to all sizes of gathering,” she advises.

From the retailer point of view, traditional festive sales techniques are holding firm. “We expect more customers to shop in-store so want to showcase products to them, so expect big table displays,” says Nick. “There is a general feeling that the displays will continue much like they have done every year, with big tables of main items like Christmas puds, chocolates, gifts and more!”

Trend-setters

Food trends, as ever, are worth noting as we enter the festive season. While tradition will always be king – who can say no to a bronzed turkey with glistening cranberry chutney and a mountain of dusted mince pies? – the lockdown trend for internationally-inspired flavours is sure to continue in some guise or another, plus each household may have developed its own individual traditions they’ll be expecting their favourite retailers to cater for. “As we approach Christmas there are many things that retailers need to think about when deciding their range for the festive period. In the specialist retail sector consumers want to see products that are authentic as well as catering for the many different dietary requirements and lifestyle living,” explains Paul Garrod, managing director of Skoulikas Bedford, Continental fine food provider. “The sector needs to shout about the many different products that sometimes the major retailers do not stock.” Considering the different dietary lifestyles of your customers will reap rewards. “Can you stock products that appeal to the many different needs of the consumer, ie vegan, gluten-free and lactose intolerant? These are growing areas and people visit shops looking for these types of products,” he advises.

For Nick, the lockdown trend to ‘buy British’ is set to carry on well beyond the festive season. “We have seen a focus shift to British produce more so than before, and I think this will continue for Christmas – especially with butchery orders. Customers want to know where their products are coming from, and as we have our own herd of Red Poll and Angus cows and work closely with poultry suppliers and farms supplying pork and other items, we know where our products come from and can answer any questions customers have.”

For Suffolk Food Hall, classic Christmas fare is set to get tills ringing this Christmas. “I think customers focus more on their traditions over Christmas; they want to keep to food and drink they have enjoyed in previous years because they know it will be well received,” Nick explains.

Indulgence quota

It’s needless to say that Christmas is often a time of indulgence, but be smart about how you approach your most luxe items this year. Products





THE ONLINE OPPORTUNITY

Michael Freedman, senior shopper insight manager at IGD, shares his insight into the potential of e-commerce for fine food businesses

Although we have seen a drop-off in online food and grocery shopping since the peaks of the national lockdowns, the level of online food shopping remains elevated. Many shoppers tend to turn to online food services during the Christmas period and we expect this to be even higher than average in 2021.

Smaller brands and retailers should consider:

- With unique and differentiated ranges, smaller businesses should ensure they’ve got the ‘brilliant basics’ to stand out online, including product descriptions, imagery and icons
- Driving visibility should be a key focus, so investing in email and social campaigns to provide seamless information and ‘adds to basket’
- Focus on ensuring availability, on-time delivery and quality, and use content to communicate this to shoppers
- Consider partnering with quick commerce operators to cater for more last-minute Christmas celebrations. Quick commerce companies deliver groceries to customers in less than one hour, often targeting the sub-30-minute fulfilment



which moonlight as great gifting options will be a smart stocking decision, and some shoppers will want to go all out to make up for last year – expensive Champagne, the finest cheese and chocolates, the lot – but be sure to cater to the more restrained customer, too. While some consumers have saved over the past 18 months, others have struggled, so offering indulgences at a variety of price points is a good way to go. The Lipstick Effect will no doubt be in full force this Christmas, so position your 'affordable luxuries' front and centre and they'll be flying off the shelves.

"In 2020 we saw shoppers spend less on treats – tins of chocolates and biscuits, party foods and desserts – as they celebrated in smaller groups," says Michael. "If the situation with Covid-19 is a positive one, I would expect this to change back to 'normal' – with shoppers placing more emphasis on treats and visiting friends and family, and a return to those smaller, more casual occasions in the build up to Christmas that didn't really happen in 2020.

"However, much will depend on how shoppers feel financially and whether they are riding the upper or lower arm of the UK's current K-shaped economic recovery. Consumers who have struggled financially through the pandemic may see a more subdued Christmas with less treats, smaller celebrations and may potentially stay at home rather than spending in the out-of-home sector."

According to Judy, great merchandising is the key to selling indulgent items. "Catch the eye on top of the meat counter with the Wine of the Week, perfect for the roast beef or turkey. Ensure your special mustard with truffle or the seasonal chutney with cranberries get great positions on the cheese counter. Highlight them as 'We Love…' to give them that personal touch and build your customers' trust in your brand."

As well as merchandising your product range well, be sure to offer a great customer service to differentiate yourself from the multiples and maintain your enlarged lockdown audience. "Flag up your expertise, and that of your team, to show that you can help your customers to build that perfect cheeseboard – whether as a gift or centrepiece for themselves," she says, "and offer add-ons such as a pack of your favourite crackers for those that take you up."

Now that events are back in business, consider reinstating Meet the Producer and tasting events to get your customers engaging with your quality products. "Wine or spirit tasting events to help customers choose what to buy as gifts can become showcases for all your choicest product lines," but she recommends "involving your suppliers well in advance to ensure you don't miss the boat, particularly if you are working with small producers who you really want to be associated with.

"There's nothing like the distiller him- or herself coming along to wax lyrical about all the botanicals in a range of gins for instance; passion and enthusiasm sell, so capture that in your showcases."

By offering your customers truly exceptional products, service and experience – all the while catering to your customers' varied circumstances – Christmas 2021 can be one to remember… for all the right reasons.

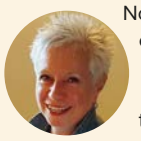
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FESTIVE SEASON MERCHANDISING 101

Judy Roberts of Right Product, Right Place shares her tips for optimising the Christmas opportunity

WORK THOSE HOTSPOTS



Now more than ever, the hotspots around your space will need to pull their weight. Reserve these spaces for those products that generate a good return and demonstrate good things about how well you curate your product range.

GET EVERYONE INVOLVED

Ensure your team is involved in the creation of some eye-catching displays by deciding on groups of products to display together. Helping customers to effortlessly see beyond the one product they have come in for and build something that piques interest and inspires an associated purchase, will ensure you increase your basket size and spend. Enabling the personalisation of hampers and other foodie gifts assemblies should be high on your list of priorities at this point. Far better to take your customer on a journey of discovery in putting together their own perfect selection for their friends and family, rather than have to try and offer (and then assemble!) 20 different hampers online.

LIGHT UP

Integrate seasonal props and don't forget the lighting to call attention to your efforts. Now's the time to include fairy lights and other sparkly décor items will catch the eye and distract regular customers from their customary path through your spaces.

GO WITH THE FLOW

Make sure you consider which direction(s) customers will approach your displays or counters from and ensure that your displays are facing that flow. Creating 'speedbumps' within the customer flow will help to raise the visibility of your stock. Don't allow grand vistas straight through your space. Instead create a point of interest beside every counter space or shelving where you display products that attract attention to the main counters they are associated with. This will halt people in their tracks and increase dwell time while they take in more of what you have on offer. Queues are not all bad news – they can be the perfect place to showcase new or relevant products while customers are not doing anything else. Consider how the big chain stores do this within their zig-zag queue system, particularly by the tills – your last chance to increase the average spend!

LOOK UP

Use all the height of your spaces and raise customers' eyes to all that you have on offer. Hanging oversized Christmas baubles or cut-outs from your rafters or light fittings above your displays will help to attract attention to them, and create a more immersive atmosphere.

EXCLUSIVITY SELLS

Specially arranged events such as cheese and wine pairings, hamper making, and early-bird Christmas shopping evenings can be great to give customers something that they really can't get online. Create that special 'membership' feeling for your regular customers by starting now to collect their details, if you don't already, and building a pertinent mailing list of people who want to hear from you. Flag up your interest in gathering their email addresses at various points in the store. Highlight exclusive events or deals that only those who sign up will be able to access. Numbers for events you hold will inevitably be limited to ensure sufficient spacing, so this can be a great selling point – first come, first served can really help to push customers to make that positive decision.

> "Queues are not all bad news – they can be the perfect place to showcase new or relevant products while customers are not doing anything else. Consider how the big chain stores do this within their zig-zag queue system, particularly by the tills – your last chance to increase the average spend!"



5 IDEAS TO SELL MORE... CHUTNEYS & PICKLES

The humble preserve is a staple of every fine food selection, but could yours be pulling in a few more pounds?

How are sales in your chutneys and pickles section right now? It's always a great (and, let's face it, easy) category to showcase local makers, some out-there culinary influences and classic styles echoing your shop's signature theme, so investing a little time in your range of chutneys and pickles is a no brainer. But how well are yours selling through? According to Mintel's Richard Caines, senior food and drink analyst, "Value sales of pickles, chutneys and relishes continue to increase slowly, but growth in 2019 was lower than that seen in 2017 and 2018, and volumes fell back compared with 2018. In fact, volumes have been mostly flat since 2014, showing that higher prices have been driving what growth has been seen in the segment." Are higher prices, rather than growing numbers of units shifted, responsible for success in your shop? Mintel has seen pickles and chutneys that add pizazz to international ingredients make a difference. "While growth in 2019 was predominantly down to inflation, within this overall picture premium ranges and pickles to go with world cuisines have helped to support sales, which increased by one percent to £212 million in 2019."

There are some demographic factors that will impact consumption. While it can be assumed that 2020's boom in home chutney-making has dropped off as people return to the workplace, according to Mintel a decline in consumption of bread (a 'key carrier product') presents a challenge to the pickles market. Analysts found that only 44% of people used pickles, relishes or chutneys in the three months to February 2020. So has the 'Covid effect' that's driven demand in some categories shown up in market data here? "Like table sauces, sales of pickles, chutneys and relishes have been boosted by increased demand for food to eat at home during the Covid-19 pandemic," finds Mintel, "but to a slightly lesser extent given their lower pre-Covid growth projection and lower overall usage." Sales are nonetheless expected to return to low annual growth to reach £229 million by 2024, with luxury ingredients driving value as 36% of consumers see them as a good reason to pay more. Here's our guide to maximising sales...

... as leftovers superheroes

Not only is food waste a huge problem (British households waste around 4.5 million tons of food every year, or approximately seven percent of the food they buy, according to businesswaste.co.uk) it's also a very high-profile cause that clocks up a lot of column inches and minutes of airtime. The drive to reduce the UK's carbon footprint (as well other environmental impacts, and grocery spend) often includes action on domestic food waste, and a plethora of cookbooks have emerged encouraging foodies to make more of their leftovers, most recently Anna Jones (*One Pot, Plan, Planet*) and Melissa Helmsley (*Eat Green*) and eco chef Tom Hunt (*Eating for Pleasure, People & Planet*).

Buying ready-made pickles and chutneys saves home cooks buying multiple jars of obscure spices or expending precious power bubbling pans for hours. What's more, great condiments have magical powers to transform sad and sorry leftovers into a real feast, and their excellent longevity in cool cupboards or fridges give them an anti-perishable status that's entirely fitting for today's conscious consumer. Signposting the chutneys and pickles on your shelves as food waste heroes that will help rehabilitate cold meats, leftover veg and other random bits and bobs could be a real win.

... as scratch cooks' secret weapons

"We undertook some consumer research last year which highlighted that cooking had become increasingly important for most people last year," says Becky Vale of artisan chutney maker Tracklements, "both as a ritual and punctuation to the day and also as a reason to become more experimental, learn new cooking skills and try new foods. We all missed eating out so recreating restaurant meals also became more popular. People have definitely traded up to top tier condiments as part of this and Tracklements has experienced superb growth as a result." With working hours returning to something approaching normal for many people, condiments are also helping cooks cut some time from their meal prep. "Ours are carefully made using the finest ingredients, more often than not being gently cooked for several hours allowing them to develop truly rich, deep flavours which makes them perfect for adding to meals of every description," says Becky. "They are the secret weapon of the larder, generously transforming simple dishes into sumptuous feasts and adding a belt of intense flavour to everything they accompany."

Delia Smith may have opened the floodgates for ready-made flavour cheats, but the generations of chefs who have followed continue to put chutneys and pickles on the radar for serious home cooks. Just as Marmite has appeared on swanky restaurant menus, so top chefs are increasingly sharing secrets to getting big flavour into meals quickly. Becky points to Jamie Oliver's endorsement of Tracklements' products in his latest book *7 Ways*. "He says 'I use a lot of condiments in this book... they guarantee flavour and save hours of time in preparation... I think cheat ingredients are great! They help keep food exciting'," points out Becky. "And he's not alone; chef and restaurateur Mark Hix is also a fan, using Tracklements mustards as the base for dressings for everything from remoulade to mackerel."

... as add-on sales

Discrete SKUs that can tempt punters at the point of sale are always a great win, and chutneys and pickles are a great way to bump up average spend. Ambient, easy-to-use and available in some bombastic and fun recipes, chutneys and pickles make great high-value till-point stock. What's more, they can offer customers a little hint of a new cuisine or flavour profile without diving in with both feet. Perhaps that's why novel and exciting flavours jump off the shelves in this section.

"We're definitely seeing consumer demand for more challenging, exotic flavours in this category," says Finn Dunlop, group purchasing manager of independent fine food retailer Macknade, which has stores in Faversham and Ashford. "Our deli menus include kimchi in one or two of the dishes and this is certainly a popular choice with customers. We also stock Bottlebrush Ferments in

> "Hoarding storecupboard luxuries has been practically de rigueur in the pandemic era, and the long shelf lives of ambient chutneys and pickles are the perfect gift items"



four varieties – ranging from the gentler Yellow One to the really hot Red One – to cater for the consumer appetite for ferments." As food writers, restaurants and the rise in international takeaways push tastes, big flavours will continue to do well. "We've seen lots from food writers like Ottolenghi and Sabrina Ghayour who have expanded our journey to sour flavours and experimenting with different styles," says Becky. Once safe, sampling is an easy and effective way to enthuse customers, and chutneys and pickles make the perfect flavour bombs to wow wavering shoppers.

... as an integral part of the artisan cheese revolution

Support for the UK's specialist cheeses has sky-rocketed thanks to a campaign to get Brits buying from small makers hit by the hospitality shutdown. But as appreciation and love for the UK's traditional, small batch cheeses has grown, there's surely scope to upsell born-again curd nerds some equally excellent accompaniments. "Our customers are looking for us to inspire them and stock pickles and chutneys that are going to elevate their flavour experience," says Finn. "We also take a holistic view of our retail offer to ensure that our products work together and complement each other, in this case, our chutneys and pickle range can be expertly matched with our extensive range of artisan cheeses."

"For customers looking to serve up a well-considered cheese board, the accompanying preserves are just as important in delivering a sublime taste experience. A beautifully packaged chutney is also an excellent addition to a gifting hamper and is an important element of our Cheese Experience Subscription. We also stock Le Tamerici Mostarda, a range of mustard fruits produced in Northern Italy including orange, fig and pear flavours, all of which go really well as an alternative to chutney with cheese and charcuterie. They are very popular with our customers and we also serve them with our deli platters on the menu."

... as excellent gifts

Christmas is coming and the opportunity to win the spend of customers looking for gifts in their Secret Santa price brackets, stocking fillers or fail-safe gifts for an awkward loved one is gearing up. Gifting was a key driver of growth in luxury and premium foods last Christmas, with hampers representing a particularly practical gift in uncertain times. Indeed, hoarding storecupboard luxuries has been practically de rigueur in the pandemic era, and the long shelf lives of ambient chutneys and pickles are the perfect gift items.

Of course it's sugar, a rather demonised ingredient of late, that gives chutneys, onion marmalades and relishes their powers of preservation. Does that represent an existential crisis for these products in the time of sugar taxes?

"Most people understand that sugar is a natural preservative and without it you need to introduce lots of highly processed artificial ingredients," reckons Becky. "In a traditional preserve you can only decrease the sugar by increasing vinegar which gives a very different flavour profile. Plus people generally understand they won't be eating tablespoons of a condiment in one sitting. We have a spoonful alongside your main foods; it's nothing like the volumes you take in with a sugary drink."



2021 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

STOCK CHECK



HAWKSHEAD RELISH CHEESEBOARD CHUTNEY

A soft and fruity chutney, made with apple, figs and cranberries, and finished with a dash of Pinot Noir.

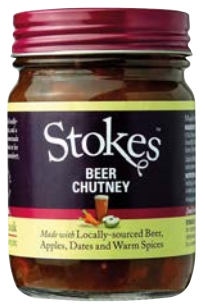
hawksheadrelish.com



TRACKLEMENTS HOT BANANA CHUTNEY

The perfect blend of sweet and spicy, combining banana with cardamom, cayenne, ginger, turmeric and chilli.

tracklements.co.uk



STOKES BEER CHUTNEY

A uniquely rich chutney made with locally sourced beer, root vegetables, apples, and a selection of warm spices.

stokessauces.co.uk



SNOWDONIA SPICED TOMATO & VODKA CHUTNEY

A sensational combination of sun-dried tomatoes from Italy and premium French vodka.

snowdoniacheese.co.uk



ROSEBUD PRESERVES YORKSHIRE WENSLEYDALE CHUTNEY

A classic combination of fresh Bramley apples, plump sultanas and traditional spices.

rosebudpreserves.co.uk



THE BAY TREE AWESOME AUBERGINE PICKLE

A rich, aromatic chutney with sweet and tangy notes with pockets of garlic, red pepper and aubergine.

thebaytree.co.uk



SEASON'S DRINKING

Christmas is boom time for alcohol sales, but what will really go off with a pop? Anna Blewett investigates



COMMENTATORS



ALEX CONTI
THE APIARIST GIN



DIMA DEINEGA
DIMA'S VODKA



ED SMITH
THE EMISSARY



JEN BAERNREUTHER
SPECIALITY DRINKS GROUP



OLLY SMITH
WINE WRITER

Christmas is coming, and with a potentially explosive set of circumstances on the cards for festive drink sales, many in the market are eyeing the competition between on- and off-trade for consumers' alcohol spend. Last Christmas was itself a record-breaker according to market data from Nielsen, with £12 billion spent on alcoholic sales in the four weeks up to Christmas, giving a huge boost to overall grocery sales. This year very different factors are at play: pubs and restaurants look set to remain open, but unrestricted social, professional and familial gatherings – subject to tight limits last year – could really see a spike for retail demand. "There will definitely be a strong interest this year in family reunions, as it has been a long time since many shared Christmas together, so bringing a bottle as a house gift will have a lot of uptake, as well as sending across the country to people we can't be with in person," predicts James Kerslake, founder of cocktail brand Tom Savano. "Of course this can all change heavily should we experience another spike in cases or more restrictions, which would once again drive strong sales in the off trade."

Ready, steady, go!

A real area of interest is ready-to-drink cocktails, a category that could have a great year as travel-starved Brits look for escapist experiences with an international feel. "The ready-to-pour category has two main drivers: the weather and occasions," says James. "It is in constant flux with the on-trade, as people will either drink at home, or at a bar, not both. So as weather worsens, sales often pick up. Of course occasions mean people getting together, the desire to make something special, which usually involves a nice bottle of wine or cooking good food. Christmas hits both of these, being both a strong occasion for family and friend get togethers, also one synonymous with enjoying a few drinks, along with being deep into winter when it's much colder to head outside. Add to that a boost from gifting – sending loved ones a nice bottle as a gift – and you can see why Christmas is a huge boom for the ready-to-pour cocktail category. We certainly expect to see almost half our yearly sales in the final quarter."

Spirits saw huge growth last Christmas, with sales of tequila up 59%, flavoured vodka up 50% and spiced rum up 45%. So what's the safe bet for buyers stocking for Christmas 2021? "This has been the ultimate question for a number of years as every distiller envisioned an imminent drop in gin sales in favour of a massive upturn on rum," says Alex Conti, founder of The Apiarist Gin who recently added a British rum to the range. "However, it hasn't really happened as both drinks seem to be going from strength to strength and gin sales/the distilling of gin continues to grow regardless. I think they can happily sit alongside each other. After all, sometimes you fancy a G&T and at other times you might want to try a rum and tonic."

Ginning is winning...

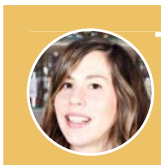
Rum isn't the only winner here. "The learning from gin has been the growing appetite from consumers to discover more spirits and become increasingly discerning about what they want to drink and how they want to drink it," says Dima Deinega, founder of the Ukrainian-centric spirit Dima's Vodka. "Lockdown has accelerated this, with consumers taking the time to make themselves premium drinks at home – branching out from their typical gin and tonics. I believe

> For a beautiful, festive fizz that's world class as well as utterly scrumptious, I'll be encouraging shoppers to treat themselves to the best English sparkler they can find. Aside from supporting our local economy and delving into the homegrown tales behind the wines, these bottles are sky-high in quality right now – and the choice of top UK wineries is so extensive you can have some fun shopping around the counties





THE ON-TRADE SUPPLIER



Jen Baernreuther, commercial director at the Speciality Drinks Group, explores which drinks will sell this season

For the serious spirits drinker we expect to see an increase in high-end rum sales alongside the usual Scotch and Cognac sales. There is an increase in single cask, cask strength and rare expressions on the market and these can act as a great first step into drinking neat spirits or digestifs but are also complex enough for the spirits aficionado. Drinks like the Negroni have seen huge success over the last few years; as more people are drinking at home they will continue to be a great serve for entertaining: easy to prepare, sophisticated flavours that can easily be turned into a more festive drink.

No and low continues to gain momentum. Whilst traditionally people tend to drink more at Christmas, the launch of so many good low and no products will help promote balance and moderation whilst still creating a sense of occasion. We are also seeing increase in premiumisation; people are drinking less but better quality. Customers will be ready to celebrate with loved ones and that means Champagne, so we're expecting sales of Champagne to be high this festive season but with more of a focus on high-quality, interesting wines from small growers and vintage Champagnes rather than the usual suspects.

What does 'indulgence' look like in December '21? Exclusive Spirits (Single Casks, Big age statements); Luxury Tequila; Cocktail Subscriptions; Large-format Champagne, independent, sustainable and hand-crafted products. New ready-to-drink products for easy entertaining and experiential gifts will be wowing consumers this Christmas.

that other spirits will benefit from these new behaviours, especially at Christmas time. As with the wine category, consumers are growing their appreciation for craft, independent spirits brands, which is very exciting for brands such as Dima's. We see Christmas as a key moment for consumers to pass on their discoveries in other spirit fields from the past year to their loved ones."

Fizz was a big winner last year, with Champagne sales up 18% and crémante experiencing 51%. "Prosecco is the number one bubbles of choice over the Christmas period and a category that is continuing to achieve recognition and credibility," says Ed Smith, who brings premium Prosecco to market via his brand The Emissary. "Brits drink over 100 million bottles of Prosecco a year, with Christmas as a key season – but we're now seeing a growing appreciation for the premium Prosecco category in particular, which is exciting for us. People are leaning towards quality over quantity with their drinks choices, taking the time to research the products they're consuming, their origin and provenance and discovering new, independent brands."



Conscious consumerism

We know that shoppers care more than ever about the impact of their spend, but this could be especially true at Christmas. Why? Not only does research show consumers are willing to pay more for products they can feel good about, but at Christmas they will be keen to spread this good will – and display their pro-social choices to others in the drinks they gift and serve up. "Provenance and authenticity has been a big trend for a number of years now," agrees James. "It's very much down to a younger generation who have grown up in a world where much work needs to be done to maintain it in it's current state, due to decades of excess. It is inherent in the younger generation's culture that they have to care where things come from, as it's much harder to make buying decisions with a clean conscience now that they know of the problems that exist with sustainability and globalisation. People are becoming more responsible consumers and are enjoying the afterglow effect of knowing that you have shopped ethically and consciously. It is also somewhat of a status symbol: when people visit your house or see what you're drinking, it adds a bit of culture, depth and kudos to our social image when we are seen with the right sort of brands, not to mention it being a great conversation starter."

Investing in products that prove their authenticity and conscious credentials to the consumer is a real no brainer. "This past year has demonstrated that consumers care greatly about both the origins and provenance of spirits," agrees Dima. "Now, more than ever, they enjoy experiencing the culture and authenticity that surrounds a spirit, learning how to drink it how it is traditionally and locally intended. We're seeing a more curious consumer, one that is receptive to learning new things."

> "Whilst traditionally people tend to drink more at Christmas, the launch of so many good low and no products will help promote balance and moderation whilst still creating a sense of occasion"

THE WINES TO STOCK



Home Cocktail Bible by Olly Smith (Quadrille, £20) is published on 11th November

If I were Christmas buyer for a fine food indie? I'd list white wine from Greece – the boutique production delivers wines of scrumptious and unique character. A firm favourite is Gerovassiliou Malagousia 2020, which tastes like peaches wreathed in jasmine. It's the perfect pairing for anyone having shellfish this Christmas. I'd also build a big section devoted to modern Austrian wine for some of the most fascinating reds and pristine whites in Europe right now. And I'd go big on Australia; so hard to beat for diversity and creativity, especially in natural winegrowing.

Sherry is still the biggest fine wine bargain on the wine map, and I'd be hosting tastings with a few simple nibbles to rev up the palates of everyone possible. From bone dry Manzanillas to lush sweet Pedro Ximenez, it's a champion wine style. And for mince pies, pop open a mighty Madeira! Those wines are beyond delicious and taste like liquid festive treats. Best of all, it's a personal recommendation of something thrilling in a wine shop over an informal chat about wine. Whenever I buy a bottle in an indie wine shop I always seem to make a new friend!

For a beautiful, festive fizz that's world class as well as utterly scrumptious, I'll be encouraging shoppers to treat themselves to the best English sparkler they can find. Aside from supporting our local economy and delving into the homegrown tales behind the wines, these bottles are sky-high in quality right now – and the choice of top UK wineries is so extensive you can have some fun shopping around the counties.

CHRISTMAS PUDDINGS

WHERE TRADITION MEETS TASTE

A festive table isn't complete without an array of sweet delights to enjoy, and customers will be keen to trade up to iconic, traditional favourites this year

COMMENTATORS



WOUTER VAN DONGEN
THE HYPER LOCALIST



DOM MCCALL
BUXTON PUDDING CO

Christmas tables should always be filled with luxury and indulgence, but in 2021 the desire to go the extra mile with premium food and drink will be even more pronounced following the small gatherings and virtual celebrations of Christmas 2020. "After last year's restricted Christmas celebrations, being able to spend time together with family and loved ones is going to be all the more precious and special," predicts Wouter van Dongen, director of The Hyper Localist, which sells food and drink products made locally across Europe. "With that in mind, I think many people will go the extra mile to make this a memorable Christmas, and there will be a real focus on quality and artisan foods," he adds.

Welcoming family and friends back together again to – fingers firmly crossed – draw a line under the worst of the pandemic will be a prominent theme this festive season. As Wouter says, this celebratory spirit will be reflected in consumers' food and drink purchases ahead of the big day – and no Christmas menu is complete without a sweet treat to follow the main event.

Every year in the UK, 25 million Christmas puddings are eaten, the packaging firm GWP Group estimates. "Cakes and puddings are not just wonderful centrepieces, they're also designed for sharing, which makes them the ultimate addition to the Christmas table," Wouter says. "After all, Christmas is all about bringing people together around the table." Christmas puddings and fruitcakes are more than traditional, must-buy staples for the Yuletide, however. With premium ingredients and indulgent recipes, the classic puddings, innovative reimaginings and imported treats on the market today offer something to delight every shopper.

Traditional favourites

While trends come and go, there will always be a place on the table for classic recipes at Christmas. According to Dom McCall, general manager of The Buxton Pudding Company, the business's firm focus on tradition is what keeps customers coming back to its puddings year after year. This approach is perfect for Christmas pudding purists. Dom explains, "We have never been advocates of embellishing a Christmas pudding with more modern inclusions like chocolate or gold, or the dreadful ones with the rum sauce in the centre. We even make our own special bread for our puddings which, when added to a beautiful array of ingredients, results in a delightful Christmas pudding fit to grace any table in the land."

The Buxton Pudding Co's best selling Christmas pudding is a traditional, medium-sized style which is made with Bramley apples, brandy and dried fruit before being hand-mixed, steamed and finally served with cold vanilla custard, fresh cream, ice cream, brandy sauce or rum sauce. The company produces several flavours of fruitcakes as well, including one made with a homemade plum and apple brandy. However, tradition still reigns supreme here, and the best performing product is its classic Slightly Tipsy Overfed Fruitcake, made with generous lashings of brandy.

Even The Hyper Localist, which specialises in Continental products, has decided to include more classic British fare this year. "Whilst our last Christmas collection focused exclusively on Italian foods, this year we've decided to also include traditional English products," Wouter says. "We spent much of this year exploring and learning more about heritage that is closer to home. This country has a long, rich baking tradition and puddings and cakes have always played a key role in Christmas celebrations. We wanted to incorporate this into our English heritage hamper by featuring a special Yorkshire fruitcake based on a historic recipe. It's the kind of cake that has been bringing people together for decades, if not centuries."

This rich heritage shouldn't be ignored by retailers, who can use details about the history and local ingredients of a product to secure sales with customers who are focused on supporting British artisan makers or gifting products with local credentials. "A Christmas pudding or fruitcake is like a good cheese; it gets better with age," Dom says. "Retailers spend lots of time explaining the provenance of cheese, so why not display your pudding or fruitcake with its provenance? Customers love to know how items for special times of the year are made – with what, by whom and where."

A Continental classic

While there is certainly strong demand for the classics during the holiday season, the foodies among us are always keen to explore the latest buzzwords and trends making waves in the food sector. These shoppers will be searching for the most exciting new recipes and the best imported goods to bring to their Christmas tables this year.



Here in the UK, Italian panettone has risen to near-classic status as it graces more and more consumers' tables during the quintessential Christmas season – yet it still brings something different to the party when compared with traditional puddings.

As a specialist in Italian fare, Wouter is a connoisseur of panettone during the festive period. "Artisan Italian panettone will take centre stage in our Christmas range. It's such an iconic Italian product and we believe no Christmas table is complete without a panettone,"

> "This country has a long, rich baking tradition, and puddings and cakes have always played a key role in Christmas celebrations"





> Cakes and puddings are not just wonderful centrepieces, they're also designed for sharing, which makes them the ultimate addition to the Christmas table

he says. Products with strong links to Italian tradition will be of particular interest to customers. "This year, we'll be offering a unique artisan panettone from Baj, a Milanese family confectioner with a history that goes back to 1768," Wouter says. "Their panettone is made in Milan with a 100-year-old mother dough, and we're the first ones to bring it to the UK, which we're very excited about!"

From panettone, there are numerous avenues for retailers to reach further into Italian bakery treats with small-batch, authentic amaretti biscuits, or move into other areas of Europe, with products like classic German stollen.

New traditions

While even the latest launches of Christmas puddings, fruitcakes and panettone tend to err on the side of tradition, retailers can encourage customers to enjoy these festive favourites in new ways to boost their value and ensure they're not overshadowed by a gluttonous Christmas meal. For example, encourage customers to serve a classic fruitcake with a seasonal cheeseboard for a decadent pairing. The Buxton Pudding Co recommends enjoying its range of fruitcakes with white, crumbly cheeses, such as Wensleydale, Cheshire or Lancashire, which will cut through the moist, sweet flavour of the cake beautifully.

And who says the sweet treats must be saved for last? Modern Italian food brand Crosta & Mollica announced a new range of panettones this year and encourages customers to enjoy them alongside a cup of coffee in the morning as well as serving a slice with a glass of Prosecco after dinner.

Another area which is worth a second look is gifting. Food gifting saw a significant uplift during the pandemic as friends and family who were forced to be apart sent each other beautifully wrapped gifts to add to their Christmas tables. While gatherings are possible once again, food gifting could yet become an important Christmas tradition for those who can't meet in person. "Whilst this Christmas is hopefully going to be different from last year's, the pandemic isn't over yet," Wouter says. "We will still want to show love to those we can't meet, so I think that online gifting will continue to be a big deal this year." Bespoke, unique gifts and curated hampers will make perfect gifts to send out to loved ones.

Whether they are sent off to far-flung friends and family or brought home to impress guests, customers will no doubt be keen to trade up to luxury Christmas puddings and fruitcakes this year. These festive essentials are a must-stock product – and Dom only has one more tip for retailers: "Get your orders in early!"

EVERY YEAR **25 MILLION** CHRISTMAS **PUDDINGS** ARE **EATEN** IN THE **UK**

SOURCE: GWP GROUP



2021 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



BUXTON PUDDING CO'S CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Made with the finest ingredients, including fresh Bramley apples, brandy and delicious dried fruit. Hand-mixed and steamed to perfection.

buxtonpudding.co.uk



TIPTREE ORGANIC CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Made from the highest quality ingredients, including French brandy and thick cut Tawny Orange Marmalade. Palm oil and nut free.

tiptree.com



CROSTA & MOLLICA APRICOT PANETTONE

A light, sweet bread generously filled with pieces of candied Italian apricot. Hand-wrapped in Italy.

crostamollica.com



CARTWRIGHT & BUTLER ROUND DECORATED JEWEL FRUIT CAKE

The sweet centrepiece of any festive dinner table. Luxuriously indulgent.

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BAKED BY MEL'S WHISKY & GINGER BARA BRITH

The warmth of whisky and sticky sweet pieces of crystalised ginger run throughout this bara brith, full of fruit and flavour.

discoverdelicious.wales



SEGGIANO LIMONCELLO PANETTONE

The evocative flavour of Sorrento lemons that are used to produce the Amalfi Coast limoncello liqueur for this panettone sing through in every bite.

seggiano.com



THURSDAY COTTAGE AMARETTO BUTTER

Great served with a cherry tart, Christmas Pudding or baked apples stuffed with mincemeat.

thursday-cottage.com



PASTICCERIA VENEZIA VEGAN MINI PANETTONE

Made from natural mother yeast, fresh eggs and butter. Traditional with raisins and candied citron or with chocolate.



LILLYPUDS CHRISTMAS PUDDING

The finest vine fruits, apples, apricots, almonds and ginger are blended with brandy and Brentwood Brewing Company Chockwork Orange ale.

lillypuds.co.uk



BURTREE PUDDINGS DELUXE CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Rum, barley wine and stout, are combined with fresh apples, citrus, and ground almonds for a pudding with a huge depth of flavour.

burtreepuddings.co.uk



PARSON'S NOSE

THE FUTURE OF THE HIGH STREET

Despite the boom in online shopping and the damage caused by the pandemic, there is a bright future ahead for high street retailers

COMMENTATORS



TONY HINDHAUGH
PARSON'S NOSE



DEZI DALTON
RYE DELI



MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI



MIKE CHERRY
FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES

Britain's high streets have been the subject of much concern throughout the pandemic. Retail stalwarts like Debenhams and Topshop were toppled by Covid, footfall sank and vacancy rates have continued to rise. But for many retailers – especially the food and drink shops deemed 'essential' during the lockdown – the challenging landscape inspired innovation and collaboration, which has breathed new life into the high street.

Home working revival

When employees were sent to work from home in March 2020, the rippling effects this would have on their eating and shopping habits wasn't given a second thought – but the effect has been significant. With more consumers working from home, it's become commonplace to pop into a local deli at lunchtime or stop by the high street butcher to pick up ingredients for dinner. And although many offices will be calling their employees back into central locations in the near future, many more are opting for flexible or hybrid models. This new way of working could kickstart a new era for high streets and local shops who will see this newfound demand continue post-pandemic.



Indeed, research by Barclays Corporate Banking found that home and hybrid working patterns are likely to boost local high streets, with 16% of workers expecting to work entirely from home and 28% expecting a part-home, part-office model. And with 40% of shoppers planning to increase their in-store spending, the bank predicted hybrid working could lead to 17,000 new stores opening over the next year.

Further research shows that independents are filling the gaps in the high street left behind by chain closures. Local Data Company's insights found that chain grocery stores have fallen in number since the pandemic began. Across retail and hospitality venues, the group revealed that more than 17,500 chain store outlets had left high streets in 2020. This has enabled independent shops to access prime units, allowing them to capture market share left behind by the chain retailers, according to Kate Rosser, insight analyst at the Local Data Company.

Community feeling

Hybrid working and an increase in local shopping will also contribute to a stronger connection among

> "There will always be a need for a physical store, as the experience is one that cannot be replicated online"





communities. With consumers visiting their local high street shops more frequently during Covid, retailers have already built important relationships in their localities. "Independent stores are critical for local communities, as shop owners live locally and are already a part of the local community," says Kate. "They provide a personal service that can't be replicated by some of the larger chains. New openings of independent stores provide a sense of identity for a town and create spaces for communities to gravitate towards and spend time together."

Another positive side-effect of the pandemic was the collaborations that blossomed between local community businesses. "As high street shops faced the same challenges, traders collaborated in combining delivery services, so our grocery delivery also included us picking up items from the chemist or the pet shop and vice versa," says Dezi Dalton of Rye Deli in East Sussex. "This collaboration brought the high street fraternity closer, and there was a free-flow of ideas and support. It made the difference to trading figures as it was clear the community wanted to support the independent traders rather than go to the 'one-stop' supermarket option. By working together we were able to meet the needs of our local community with much greater ease and far more economically."

And as all independent retailers know, shopping small means more money stays in the local economy. Research by Visa suggests that by choosing to support local and independent businesses, online or in person, consumers could double the amount of money that stays in their local community. This means small shops will play a significant role in contributing to the pandemic recovery. "While it's too early to track the post-Covid recovery, all independent openings provide jobs and income for local communities, which will be critical for Britain's economy to bounce back," says Kate. "However, the key will be long-term resilience, as our data shows that independent stores tend to have a shorter lifespan than chain counterparts," she warns. "Local stores will need support with social media, marketing, digital channels and product selection to ensure they remain relevant and thrive long term."

> "During the pandemic, the high street simply had to work harder"

Omnichannel presence

While many shops found success through bricks and mortar collaborations and in-person trading, there is something to be said for the digital high street, too. Tony Hindhaugh, director of London butcher Parson's Nose, operates three sites on busy high streets in South Kensington, Fulham and Putney. "They were all very thriving hubs of activity with a varied mix of retailers" during the pandemic. Yet he acknowledged that many other retail shops which weren't deemed 'essential' were not quite so lucky, and as a consequence there was a "huge amount" of shop closures after the second and third lockdowns.

But while Tony attributes some of Parson's Nose's success during Covid to being allowed to keep the doors open throughout, he also points to the importance of the shop's online delivery system, which had been developed at the start of lockdown in March 2020. "This enabled us to be very agile and react to market conditions swiftly," he said. "Those who have been able to implement an efficient and stable full online delivery system (including logistics) and fulfil it have prospered throughout the pandemic. While online sales will recoil a bit, this is a definite new business vertical for the high street."

As consumers became closely acquainted with online shopping out of necessity during the lockdown, it's no surprise that the habit has stuck, and many now want to order their speciality food items from the comfort of their homes. "The most positive outcome for us during the pandemic has been all the time and effort put into developing our website," says Mark Kacary, managing director of The Norfolk Deli. "This has paid off, with levels of online sales higher now than they were pre-pandemic."

Dezi of Rye Deli also found success by catering to the online crowd. "As a food retailer we took 'out of the box' thinking to 'in the box' thinking, as did many restaurants and eateries sending out their wares in convenient hampers. This was in addition to increased home delivery service for larder and general shopping," Dezi said.

What's next?

Will there be a place for both online and physical retail in the future of high street shopping? Tony believes so. In fact, he envisions physical retail stores becoming showrooms for businesses while online quickly progresses to be the preferred retail venue. But he is still optimistic about the future of the high street. "There will always be a need for a physical store, as the experience is one that cannot be replicated online," Tony says.

The Norfolk Deli's Mark agrees. "Department stores have been replaced by virtual department stores such as Amazon, but ultimately the way the public has been desperate to get out of the house to socialise is a perfect indicator that the high street will evolve rather than die. It might be correct to say that the high street we know today or have known in the last 10 years will die, but it will be replaced in the same way that the high street of 50 to 60 years ago was replaced by what most people know now. Life, businesses and high streets change, which in many ways is probably a good thing."

The growth of community support and local shopping seen during the pandemic is also a testament to the importance of bricks and mortar retail and its place in the future. "The high street has proven its worth and value during the pandemic," Dezi says. "Customers came to realise the value the 'small shops' provided. They experienced the difference of personal service over online or big supermarket deliveries. When delivery slots from supermarkets weren't available and produce and products were scarce, the independent retailer, forever resourceful, always met, if not exceeded, expectations. The consumer was 'brought back' to the high street, and that renewed loyalty has been sustained for now – and hopefully a long time ahead."

"Retailers are integral to our communities"



MIKE CHERRY
FSB NATIONAL CHAIR

Retail businesses have faced an arduous 18 months, having to contend with difficult, changeable and often confusing Government guidance to keep customers safe, as well as absorbing the cost of lockdowns and safety protocols, which will have impacted heavily on their cashflow.

That said, we know that during the first lockdown many small firms were able to adapt to a rapidly changing and unpredictable situation by making alterations to their business. Over the last 18 months we've seen some great examples of firms creating and rolling out innovative new services and products to keep their businesses going. Some have been able to expand or start online operations and food delivery services, while others have created new products to make sure customers can still make purchases. The removal of business rates on independent food retailers in England last year was a lifeline, but while the further discount this year has been useful, fundamental reform is needed to this regressive tax, which is charged before a business has turned over a penny, let alone turned a profit. Our own research found two-thirds of small businesses in receipt of rates relief would have to close their premises or reduce their staff if their relief were removed.

Retail businesses not only provide millions of jobs in the UK but are an integral part of our communities – something which was really apparent through the pandemic. In April last year, almost 60% of small retail firms had carried out a community role during the crisis, including supporting vulnerable customers, offering free home deliveries or donating provisions to local food banks.

With the current focus on working from home and other more flexible arrangements, many local high street businesses will have enjoyed an increase in footfall, with home-based workers spending more at their nearby shops and stores. As employers look towards bringing in a more flexible approach to working on a permanent basis, this focus will likely continue giving a well-earned boost to local high streets and businesses.

HYBRID WORKING COULD LEAD TO **17,000** NEW STORES **OPENING** OVER THE NEXT **12** MONTHS



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THE FARM

For Charlie Wells, director of The Farm, Stratford, being thoroughly unique is a vital part of the plan

The Farm Stratford, which opened in 2019, is a family-run business which is passionate about providing a unique food and wellbeing destination that showcases local artisan produce and promotes ethical, wholesome and sustainable food.

Our home, the Fruit Farm in Snitterfield, was once home to hundreds of apple, pear, plum and cherry trees, which produced for the likes of Waitrose and Mr Kipling. The Farm was popular with South Warwickshire residents for its 'pick your own' fruit and strawberries, but in recent years The Farm struggled to survive and became derelict. We took on the redevelopment in 2017, and with a shared vision and a lot of hard work, we have created what we believe to be a truly stunning environment for all to enjoy.

The Farm is a collective of artisan food producers, a whole food restaurant, farm shop and delicatessen. We support local brands and champion independent suppliers from our own and neighbouring counties. Alongside this we offer educational workshops, cookery school classes and demonstrations with the intention to re-discover skills and traditions, from foraging courses to baking your own sourdough.

Local artisans produce on-site in micro-kitchens that are visible to the public so customers can engage with the producers to find out more about their products.

WHO'S IN THE FARM SHOP TEAM?

The Farm family is made up of many different wonderful people! From our shop managers Tom and Kay, Lewis the head chef of Nourish, Rose and Alice our coffee queens, fruit and vegetable buyer India, Karen in accounts, Kitty our homeware buyer and all around creative genius, Marek and Mickel our maintenance boys, Sophie our office admin, Tony our stock controller, Martin Crombie our butcher, James from Lordswood Farm, Michael from Fresh Retail our consultants... the list goes on. These individuals make up The Farm and our community.

WHAT SETS THE BUSINESS APART FROM OTHER INDEPENDENT RETAILERS?

We've always said "we're not your average farm shop"; everything from the products we sell, the food we serve in Nourish our restaurant, the shop layout, the props we use for displays, our open plan atmosphere, the events we host and the wellbeing programs we promote, make us that little bit different.

During lockdown we introduced 'Picnic on The Lawn', a Covid-safe picnic event where we sprayed 2m x 2m circles on the front lawn so customers could reserve a circle for 90 minutes and 'bubble up' safely. We provided picnic food from the shop and deli, and converted a Shepherds Hut into 'Nourish Streetfood', serving high-end takeaway food.

We also host a Monthly Makers Market where we welcome independent artisans from around Warwickshire to sell and promote their products/skills. Our favourite event right now is our 'PYO Sunshine Field' where you can pick your own sunflowers; it's been really popular and the atmosphere has been amazing!

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF AT THE FARM, STRATFORD?

Surviving a global pandemic! I know it's probably the most obvious one, but I'm so proud of the team and their hard work. It hasn't been easy, in fact we're going through the hardest part now what with staff shortages and a lack of job applicants. The Farm Stratford remained open throughout the pandemic, and the team put themselves at risk everyday to ensure customers could shop good-quality produce in a safe and pleasant environment.

We've also worked with some incredible collaborators and featured in some amazing press which, seeing as we're only two years old, we're very proud of! *The Times* 'Top 30 Farm Shops in Britain', *The Guardian* 'Skip the Services 20 stopovers off the UK motorway & A Roads', *Great British Menu* filmed their Christmas Key Worker Banquet Special with us, we've been featured in *Condé Nast Traveller*, and we've also won some fantastic awards which still make me emotional to think about them – including Rising Star FARMA 2019, Best Small Farm Shop FARMA 2020, Best Restaurant in Farm Shop FARMA 2020, Regional Winners of The Farm Shop & Deli 2021 and Muddy Stilettos Best Farm Shop 2021.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED RECENTLY, AND HOW HAVE YOU OVERCOME THEM?

During the pandemic we suffered flash flooding where the whole of the site was under water. The team spent several hours mopping up water and putting sandbags around every doorway. We closed for the following day for an almighty clear up, and within 24 hours the shop was back open as normal. It ended up being one of the best team building exercises we've done!

I would also say that the recent 'ping-demic' has been a challenge. Trying to staff whilst people are having to isolate has been tough on the team. There isn't a day where we've not short staffed. The only comforting thing is customers recognise this is a national issue so are patient with us.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE FARM, STRATFORD?

We're always trying to think of innovative ideas that are on-trend and keep The Farm fresh. We're planning to focus on the wellbeing side of The Farm more, and expand our event calendar. We have a beautiful, unique space which we want to share with many more people. Watch this space.

> "We're always trying to think of innovative ideas that are on-trend and keep The Farm fresh"



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RETAIL FORECAST

The shopping landscape has seen great changes over the past 18 months. These are the updates that are here to stay



The pathway to a post-Covid world has had many chapters so far, from the initial lockdown to the mini-revival over summer 2020 with Eat Out to Help Out, and from the Christmas shopping boom to the strict winter lockdown. Finally, we have arrived at what might be an end to lockdown, with all rules lifting in England and restrictions easing elsewhere in the UK.

Although it's still impossible to say what might come next, consumer habits have emerged in this 'new normal' that we are living in. *Speciality Food* looks at six of the latest changes in shopper behaviours...

1 A CONTINUED FOCUS ON WELLBEING

The health trend has been significantly accelerated by Covid-19, and consumer demands are reflecting this. But global research by Kantar found an interesting shift in the US market that's worth noting: although health is important to consumers, they are prioritising wellness and holistic health ideas over "managed health needs such as low carb or low fat".

For instance, when it comes to beverage occasions, 30% are looking for drinks that offer a healthier choice and 31% want beverages that offer nutritional benefits, but just 20% are looking for low carb options, which is down three percentage points.

2 SCRATCH COOKING OPPORTUNITIES REMAIN

With life getting more hectic, the scratch cooking trend will inevitably falter somewhat, but as long as consumers are working from home there will remain opportunities for more indulgent home cooked meals. Comparing March 2020 and 2021 with March 2019, Kantar found that globally consumers have taken an extra lunch and snacking occasion a week at home as a result of lockdowns.

Breakfast also offers opportunities as long as flexible working remains. Kantar noted that the average time that breakfast is eaten has shifted to later in the morning, which has changed what people are eating. In Spain, for example, nearly a quarter of all breakfasts in the first quarter of 2021 were savoury, up from 22.2% in the same period of 2019.

> "Although changing habits continue to cause uncertainty for retailers, these latest behavioural may be a sign of things to come in the post-Covid future"

3 CONVENIENCE IS BACK

Convenience shopping all but disappeared during the lockdown, but as restrictions emerge and our calendars fill up, it's clear that convenience food is back in demand for some shoppers. Sales of ready meals, cooked chickens and sandwich fillings were on the rise in May, while frozen pizzas were in demand in June, and food to go is poised to stage a comeback.

4 ONLINE SHOPPING IS STICKING

As much as physical shopping is making a comeback, e-commerce is still important to consumers, even in a post-pandemic landscape. Although Kantar recorded that the number of people buying groceries online fell in July, the channel still accounts for 13.3% of the total market, and Deloitte found that 83% of customers now expect flexible shipping and fulfillment options, like click and collect.

PwC's latest *Global Consumer Insights Pulse Survey* found that certain changes which occurred over the pandemic are sticking. In the last 12 months, 34% of shoppers bought products online weekly or daily via a computer in June (compared to 30% in March); 38% bought products via a tablet (vs 33%); 44% bought via mobile phone (vs 39%) and 42% bought via smart home voice assistants (vs 37%). Meanwhile, the Centre for Retail Research and vouchercodes.co.uk expects £120.5bn to be spent online in 2021, which is £10bn more than 2020.

5 BRICKS AND MORTAR REVIVAL

With more and more shoppers having received their vaccination, consumer confidence is increasing. One survey by Deloitte found that nearly three in four consumers in the US were comfortable going into a physical store in May 2021, while confidence in the UK was slightly lower: 55% of shoppers said they felt safe on their latest shopping trip in July. IGD's *Shopper Confidence Index* found that here in the UK, sentiment remained "relatively strong" at -3, just two points below the five-year high that was recorded in April. According to Deloitte, the role of physical stores is evolving, and retailers will have to fight to capture the attention of consumers in a post-Covid world. They can do this by emphasising the experience of shopping in store, such as with tastings and other immersive activities; building an omnichannel system, including through integrated click and collect areas; and using data to better understand their customers.

6 SPENDING LOCALLY TO RISE

Supporting local businesses remains a priority for many consumers, and a report by Integral Ad Science, *IAS Pandemic Effects: What's Next in Shifting Consumer Priorities*, revealed that 60% of respondents said they will support small and local businesses that have struggled during the pandemic. Much of that spending could be with local foodservice establishments, with 43% saying they will increase spending on dining out over the next year. However retailers' gains compared to pre-pandemic levels remain strong. While independent stores' market share has fallen since the beginning of the pandemic when business boomed, Kantar found that they have still experienced double-digit sales growth compared with 2019.

Although changing habits continue to cause uncertainty for retailers, these latest behavioural may be a sign of things to come in the post-Covid future.

IN THE LAST **12** MONTHS, **34%** OF SHOPPERS BOUGHT PRODUCTS ONLINE WEEKLY OR DAILY VIA A COMPUTER IN JUNE (COMPARED TO **30%** IN MARCH); **38%** BOUGHT PRODUCTS VIA A TABLET (VS **33%**); **44%** BOUGHT VIA MOBILE PHONE (VS **39%**) AND **42%** BOUGHT VIA SMART HOME VOICE ASSISTANTS (VS **37%**)

SOURCE: PWC'S LATEST GLOBAL CONSUMER INSIGHTS PULSE SURVEY



SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR 2021

The UK's leading showcase of artisan food & drink is back at Olympia London 6th-7th September

Speciality & Fine Food Fair returns to Olympia London on 6th-7th September 2021 with an unparalleled showcase of the most exciting and innovative producers from the UK and international speciality food sector.

The first major post-lockdown trade event for the world of fine food & drink, the Fair will be the first chance industry buyers have had to come together as a community, taste the latest products on the market and hear the stories behind the businesses and brands in almost two years.

For buyers such as Andrew Bird, Head of Food at Selfridges, the Fair is a chance to check out first-hand producers that fulfil specific business needs and consumer trends: ""When it comes to new producers, there has to be a credible sustainability story, whether it is Fairtrade, organic, plant-based, or robust supply chain traceability," he comments. "I'm looking forward to discovering the latest innovations at the Fair, brands with a strong British regional identity – whether Orkney, Cornwall or London's East End – and brands owned by creators from diverse backgrounds."

Since the last edition of Speciality & Fine Food Fair, the industry has been rife with innovation. Countless new products and producers have launched, and many retail and foodservice businesses have diversified their offering to consumers, exploring new revenue streams and ways of operating.

This year's Fair is packed with new ways for buyers to discover the products to suit their interest and business needs. Reflecting huge interest from retailers and wholesalers, this year's event will see the launch of The Sustainability Zone, in association with PALLITE, highlighting the producers leading the way when it comes to operating in an ethical and environmentally sustainable manner.

Paul Hargreaves, CEO of Cotswold Fayre, commented, "The Sustainability Zone at Speciality & Fine Food Fair is a great idea and I hope it's the start of a much bigger area to come in the future. The way the market is going it's a great time to be launching it. During the pandemic the market has moved very strongly in this direction and retailers know they need to be thinking more about sustainability."

Another new feature for 2021 is the trend trails. The Vegan & Plant-Based Trail will guide buyers around producers who cater to this rapidly growing market including The Vegan Society, which commented: "The Vegan Society's Vegan Trademark Team are excited to be part of Speciality & Fine Food Fair's new Vegan & Plant-Based Trail. With consumers becoming more conscious about the products they are purchasing, and with 1 in 4 Brits cutting back on animal products throughout the pandemic, it's more important than ever for brands to cater to the ever-growing market. We're thrilled to be supporting that growth with over 53,000 products globally registered with the Vegan Trademark."

The second trend trail is the Non-Food Trail, which will feature 'basket-boosting' giftware and homeware items for buyers to increase average consumer spend.

Daniel Williams, Project Manager at Godfrey C Williams & Son, said: "I'm looking forward to visiting the new non-food trail at Speciality & Fine Food Fair. The trail will allow me to compare and consider new and existing products that fit a higher tier of upselling, so that we can maximise our sales."



Along with all the new additions, the Fair will see the return of some firm favourites, including The Discovery Zone, which this year will feature over 100 producers in their first three years of trading. Also returning is The Drinks Cabinet, showcasing a wide range of unique drinks and drinks-related products, along with The Inspiration Bar, in association with Mixology Group, which will be providing key drinks industry insights and thought leadership sessions.



SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR LATE

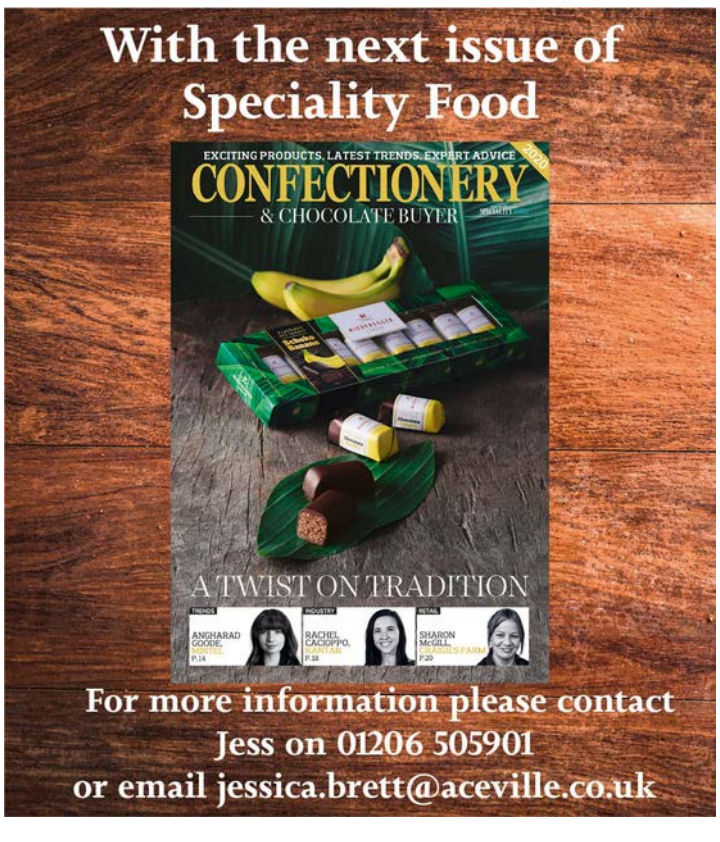
This year will see a first for Speciality & Fine Food Fair, as it introduces a special evening event on 6th September until 8pm for buyers and leading industry figures.

In addition to having a chance to learn more about the Fair's over 450 producers, evening guests will have the opportunity to attend Pitch Live, where three producers will battle it out to pitch their product to a panel of expert industry judges and win some fantastic prizes and growth opportunities.

Speciality & Fine Food Fair Late will also host GAIL's Bakery CEO Tom Molnar for an exclusive keynote session for VIP visitors, as he reflects on the growth of the business, the trends that have defined 2021 and how the industry has tackled the challenges of the past two years.

To register to attend the VIP evening celebration at Speciality & Fine Food Fair, visit specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk/industry-drinks-reception







THE DISCOVERY ZONE

Each year, buyers flock to The Discovery Zone at Speciality & Fine Food Fair to seek out new, unique producers and products. This year is no different, as the zone is packed with over 100 young businesses showcasing everything from confectionary to ready meals to innovative plant-based and vegan meat alternatives

SHURO SHIRIN. STAND 3003
High quality, frozen-from-fresh, traditional, Persian ready meals. Shuro Shirin believe that people want more Persian food! And those who don't, soon will! They are working to make Persian cuisine a British staple. Persian food can be time-consuming, it requires love and care, but Shuro Shirin's trained chefs put the work in, so you don't have to.

THE BATH ALCHEMIST. STAND 3068
The Bath Alchemist's plant infused apple cider vinegar wellness tonics are a blend of simple, natural ingredients: raw turmeric, raw ginger, habanero pepper, onion, garlic, orange zest, black peppercorns, juniper berries, star anise, rosemary, cloves and raw horseradish. These are all infused for twelve weeks in organic apple cider vinegar with 'The Mother'. The tonics are currently available in three forms: the original, which is unsweetened and suitable for vegans; the second with raw local honey; the third, with fresh raw turmeric, black peppercorns and raw local honey.

LONG SHOT DRINKS. STAND 3072
This range of award-winning hard seltzers is a refreshingly humble blend of all-natural fruit juices, alcohol and sparkling mineral water – never anything artificial. At 4% per can, under 70 calories per can, gluten-free and vegan, Long Shot brings that lighter, simpler drink you didn't know you were missing.

MADA MADA PRALINÉS. STAND 3006
A family-run business producing handmade pralinés in small batches in London. Pralinés is 50% nuts and 50% caramel. It's delicious spread on toast, drizzled over pancakes, stirred into porridge, yoghurt, and ice cream, mixed into smoothies and milkshakes — or eaten by the spoonful! And thanks to its high nut content, it's oh-so-much better for you than your everyday spread.

KENSAL PROVISIONS. STAND 3002
Kensal Provisions creates artisanal condiments, teas and provisions that are guided and inspired by Earth's wondrous bounty. The ooo'Mami Salt can and should be sprinkled on everything! Curated with herbs, spice and wild boletus mushroom powder - this salt will transform your salt life. Their devastatingly delicious condiment Silk Road Oil fuses Asia, Middle East and Northern African flavours with an umami foundation, to lift dishes and make them sing! Finally, don't forget their Nice & Cosy Tea, an organic herbal loose-leaf tea that has been curated to bring feelings of tranquillity and offer the body restorative support.

G&TEA HAND CRAFTED CORNISH GIN. STAND 3004
Created at Cornwall's only plough-to-bottle distillery, G&Tea Hand Crafted Gin is small batch distilled using ethically sourced tea blends. G&Tea have created a unique trio of gins, winning multiple awards including Global Spirit Masters Silver and double gold at Taste of the West and all within their first year. With highly distinctive bottle designs including stunning reverse labels inviting you to explore the world of flavours within these three distinctively different gins.

Discover the full range of producers at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2021 at specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk/exhibitor-list-2021

SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR AWARDS 2021

This year saw the launch of the first ever Speciality & Fine Food Fair Awards, with over 200 entries across four categories and the winners decided by a combination of expert industry judging panel and public vote. Winners will be announced live at the show.

NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: Olympia London
WHEN: 6th September 09:30-20:00
7th September 09:30-17:00
WEB: specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk

*Join **Speciality & Fine Food Fair Late** from 17:00-20.00 on 6th September for VIP drinks, live music, celebratory cocktails, Pitch Live and to get to know fantastic producers.*

> "Planet Organic is always looking to discover new products and spot the innovation, so to have a dedicated area at a trade show which highlights and brings all the new product development together is incredibly beneficial and from our experience there is always a fantastic buzz around the stands within The Discovery Zone. We can't wait to experience this again soon and meet all the producers in person"
>
> **SOPHIE DAVIES, PLANET ORGANIC**



TREND DEEP DIVE: VEGAN & PLANT-BASED

Vegan and plant-based diets have gone from a small subsection of consumers to one of the fastest growing parts of the food and drink market, the new Vegan & Plant-Based Trail at Speciality & Fine Food Fair will direct buyers straight to producers in this vibrant category

There's been a shift in thinking when it comes to meat-free diets, particularly when it comes to veganism. What used to be a debate focused largely around animal welfare has become a wider conversation encompassing sustainability, health and, most importantly, great tastes and a wide variety of products.

The Vegan & Plant-Based Trail at Speciality & Fine Food Fair will allow buyers with an interest in this category to quickly and easily find the products and producers to meet their needs. From imitation meat products to confectionery to sauces & spreads, there has never been more diversity and innovation in this corner of the market.

"Meat and seafood replacements is one of our most shopped areas, after confectionery," comments Scott McCulloch, Co-Founder of online vegan grocery shop TheVeganKind. "There are tastes that are so advanced that people can't tell the difference. The options are there for anyone who wants to make the change.

"We're looking for products that taste great, have great branding and that stand out. We need products that fill a gap in the market. You can find bacon and plant-based cheeses, vegan caviar, fois gras, square sausage, black pudding etc, the NPD is phenomenal. New products are appearing all over the world and the UK is leading the way."

Damoy Robertson, Founder of The Vegan Review, adds, "As a media company, we are uniquely positioned to witness the growth of the vegan and plant-based sector. What has stood out is the amount of new brands popping up every day. Some of these are from existing companies who are pivoting but we are seeing a large amount of startups emerging and doing well despite the pandemic. With record investments, and jaw-dropping acquisitions, we should assume records will continuously get broken over the coming years."

Interest in the world of vegan and plant-based products isn't just coming from the consumer end. Online vegan marketplace Mighty Plants, which specialises in frozen food, has recently welcomed investment from Dismatrix, whose founder Miray Zaki said: "Dismatrix is proud to have invested in Mighty Plants, a new delivery service for frozen vegan food and desserts. The founders of Mighty Plants launched a vegan frozen delivery service to help combat the food waste problem and the greenhouse emissions.

"They offer better options to those following a plant-based diet from both large and small producers. Buying frozen and plant-based foods can help cut food waste throughout the supply chain and in households. This was a perfect fit for investment firm Dismatrix, which backs sustainably-driven, yet financially lucrative opportunities in the plant-based food revolution.

Mighty Plants Co-Founder Gabe Osbourne added, "Having a vegan and plant-based trail at Speciality & Fine Food Fair is a great idea. I know for us it will make such a big difference being able to focus only on the products we would want to stock rather than sifting the hundreds of producers that attend."



To discover the full list of vegan and plant-based producers on offer at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2021, head to specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk/trend-trails





FOOD FOR THOUGHT STAGE

Speciality & Fine Food Fair's main stage returns with a bang, packed full of innovative thought leadership, up-to-minute industry analysis and revealing the winners of the inaugural Speciality & Fine Food Fair Awards.

SESSION: CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM: HOW TO IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO YOUR CUSTOMERS' NEEDS

When: 12:30pm - 1:00pm, Monday 6th September

Host: Henri Allen, *A Plastic Planet*
- Julie Cleijne, *Sustainable Kitchen*
- Catherine Conway, *Unpackaged*
- Stefano Cuomo, *Macknade*
- Paul Hargreaves, *Cotswold Fayre*

Educating your customer and understanding your customers' expectations go hand-in-hand when it comes to sustainability. As consumer demands drive more choices in all aspects of your business, what actions make the most impact? From supply-chain shake-ups, transitioning to unpackaged, recycling efforts and revitalising business values, our panel of experts will leave you inspired to evolve for 2022 and beyond.

SESSION: MORE THAN JUST SPRAY-ON BRANDING: THE PROS AND CONS OF OWN BRAND PRODUCTS

When: 3:45pm-4:15pm, Monday 6th September

Host: Holly Shackleton, *Speciality Food Magazine*
- Mary Lynch, *Beau's Gelato*
- Scott Winston, *Fortnum & Mason*
- Rachael Winter, *Daylesford Organic*

There are many opportunities with building an own-brand product range, but it comes with its challenges too. As white label propositions attract more and more interest from retailers, our panel delve into the key topics discussing packaging, production, product development and much more.

SESSION: FRESH FOOD OVERHAUL: MAKING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS WORK FOR YOU

When: 2:00pm-2:30pm, Tuesday 7th September

Host: Damoy Robertson, *The Vegan Review*
- John Farrand, *Guild of Fine Food*
- Domini Hogg, *Tried and Supplied*
- Dan Parker, *Veg Power*
- Robert Tate, *Appetite Me*

Seeking out quality local products is high on the agenda for most, if not all, independent food and drink retailers, but sometimes the road to building effective local supplier networks can be tricky to navigate. Join our expert panel as they discuss managing relationships with local producers and building long-lasting and effective supplier networks.

SESSION: CUTTING EDGE: THE VIEW FROM THE FRONTLINE OF FOOD & DRINK INNOVATION

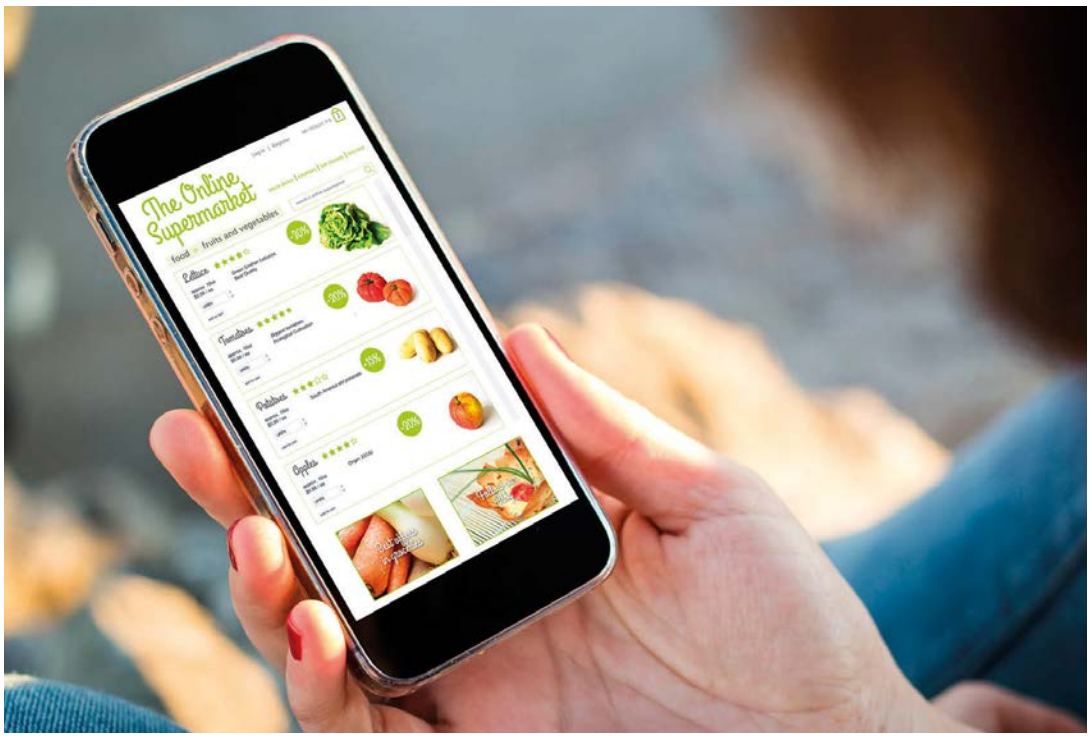
When: 3:00pm-3:30pm Tuesday 7th September

Host: Steve Walpole, *Culinary Consultant*
- Jason Danciger *Hana Group UK and Ireland*
- Dennis Mwakulua, *Lexington*
- Ben O'Brien, *Sourced Market*
- Emily Grigg, *GAIL's Bakery*

The past 18 months have thrown challenge after challenge at the food and drink sector. Retail, wholesale and foodservice businesses have been met with unprecedented demand, the need for rapid digital innovation and a renewed consumer interest in local, ethically and sustainably produced products. This session brings together the professionals at the forefront of innovation across the entirety of the industry, from production and packaging to NPD and customer insights.

> "The seminar program at Speciality & Fine Food Fair is an invaluable source of information and a key part of the Fair. It's an opportunity to hear from multiple industry experts with specialised knowledge and to learn from their collective experiences"
>
> **ADRIAN BEALE, BUCKLEY & BEALE**

View the full seminar programme for Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2021 at specialityandfinefoodfairs.co.uk/whats-on/sessions-2021



ONLINE RETAIL 101

E-commerce has unquestionably been a lifeline for fine food lovers and businesses alike throughout the pandemic. Here's how to make the most of the opportunity without sacrificing your bricks-and-mortar base

There's never been a better time to up your online game. Shoppers are spending more time online than ever before, and on all sorts of platforms – from e-commerce sites to social media and beyond – so it makes sense to boost your assets while the iron's hot. A strong online presence will boost your business in more ways than one. Not only will it provide a new, profitable arm to your retail establishment, but it will raise the profile of your business beyond your immediate area; potentially attracting new locals as well as consumers from further afield to check out your wares. Social media, too, is worth an investment of time (and potentially funds). Its various platforms offer a wealth of community-building opportunities.

With that in mind, we've gathered exclusive information from an array of experts to boost your business's presence on the internet and excite existing – and potential – customers.



BALANCE BRICKS AND MORTAR WITH ONLINE PLATFORMS

CREATE A CLEAR CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Think about how easy it is for customers to navigate your bricks-and-mortar store. Now translate that to online to ensure that shoppers can easily find what they need. Ensure that images of stock are visually pleasing and that product descriptions are clear and concise. In-store customers have the option to ask questions, so compiling a list of FAQs or adding a live chat function could help to close sales.

TRAINING STAFF

Ciaran Bollard, CEO of Kooomo explains, "Omnichannel can only be fully effective when in-store staff are as good as the online service agents. Sales assistants should spend more time connecting with shoppers and be ready to tend to their personal needs. Ensure staff are familiar with your website and offer to support in the same way as they would online."

> "Keep in mind that your physical store and online shop need to reflect one another and work together, for example sharing a similar aesthetic and brand message"

CHOOSING AN E-COMMERCE PLATFORM

Running a bricks-and-mortar store alongside an online shop requires laying good foundations. Choosing an e-commerce platform is the first stage. There are plenty out there, such as Wix or Shopify, that give you everything you need to get started on a budget and provide all the checkout functionality needed. An important element to keep in mind is that the physical store and online shop need to reflect one another and work together, for example sharing a similar aesthetic and brand message. According to Ciaran, it's key that all the pieces of the digital commercial puzzle come together within the customer journey: "Retailers should look for a platform that is flexible enough to handle the seasonality of catalogue management so that products and images can be added quickly, pricing can be adapted in line with stock levels and promotions can be easily managed."

INVEST IN PERSONALISATION

In the competitive world of online retailing, customer connection is crucial. Putting time and effort into personalising your digital offerings will help boost your sales, and encourage repeat business too. In the speciality food and drink industry the emphasis is on produce with great stories behind them, and being able to communicate those with customers is all part of the fine food shopping experience. Translating that connection online means creating an online experience that's tailored to your customers' needs.

CREATE VALUABLE CONTENT

These days consumers are receiving an array of marketing messages through social media, websites and newsletters. Stand out amongst the crowd by creating content of value to your new and existing customers. Dan Jones is the head of CRO (Conversion Rate Optimisation) at Search Laboratory, and he advises, "Developing an advanced marketing funnel which includes a top layer of engaging and valuable content that keeps users coming back to the site time and time again. Examples of content which would be suitable include informational blog posts, downloadable resources or on-site quizzes. By providing consumers with real meaningful 'value', it ensures that when they are ready to move down the sales funnel, your brand is the first that comes to mind. If you're a food retailer, think about what content at each stage might look like and how it would differ."

PERSONALISE YOUR CONTENT

Sairah Mojib is head of marketing, EMEA at Widen, a digital asset management provider. She explains how to personalise your content and why it's key to retaining repeat customers:

1. INSTILLS TRUST

"A successful personalisation strategy exudes authenticity and instills a sense of trust when it comes to marketing, but to do it well requires significant creativity and effort. Going way beyond the basics of a birthday email or a seasonal greeting, personalisation helps to humanise the customer experience and give retailers' messaging real legitimacy, which not only helps convert to vital sales but encourages repeat custom."

2. CREATES CONNECTION

"In today's competitive food and beverage retail landscape, personalisation is a basic market demand that helps consumers connect with the brand – often on an emotional level. For example, who remembers the 'Share a Coke' campaign? But to do personalisation well and attract those all-important repeat customers, it needs to go beyond basic demographics such as age, sex and location. Through a registration questionnaire for example, a retailer can find out about dietary requirements or taste preferences."

MAXIMISE YOUR WEBSITE

The first step to making your website the powerhouse of opportunity it has the potential to be is assessing your approach to it. If you consider it an add-on needing the occasional update to keep it from being out-of-date, chances are it won't be bringing the numbers to your sales sheets that you're after. Instead, if you approach it as an important arm of your business, therefore applying time and investment into getting it right, you'll be on the right track for boosting your business in a newly profitable way.

First up, it's important to consider how you want to present your business to existing and potential customers. Remember that your website could be the first port of call for your customer base – whether they're looking for opening times, wanting to get in touch or hoping to check out your product range – so it's worth spending time and funds on getting it right.

"You might already have great content," says Audrey Madden of White Bear Studio. "If this is the case, give it a spring clean, spruce it up, and revive old evergreen content. This will help you score higher in the search engines." A bit of direct, personable contact with your audience could be a winner if you have some spare time on your hands. "This type of content marketing is usually extremely time consuming and hard to keep consistent, but now is your chance to do it right and snatch that spot on the first page of Google."

> "The days of batch-sending generic content is over; instead, look to your sales reports, check out the latest trends and think seasonally to really speak to current – and potential – customers"

"All of the pieces of the digital commerce puzzle must fit together to truly optimise every step of the customer journey," explains Ciaran Bollard of Kooomo. "Online is increasingly used as a purchasing channel, but it is often used in the research process, even if a consumer chooses to buy through a store." It's worth looking into hosting platforms which are flexible enough to adapt to a changing stock catalogue, adapt pricing in line with stock levels and easily manage promotions. "These are all crucial requirements for successful retailers," he says.

MAKE IT MOBILE

We all know about SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) by now, but have you considered mobile optimisation? "With over 30 million British consumers using smart devices – for example, mobile phones and tablets – to shop so far this year, it's important to make your website easy to use on these devices in order to avoid frustrating or losing this customer base," says Dan Jones of Search Laboratory. "Mobile optimisation can be as big as a full website design or as small as prioritising key content on a page," he explains.

While you're making your site mobile user-friendly, look into mobile payment options such as Apple Pay or PayPal – "mobile payments make it easier for consumers to purchase goods online," explains Dan, "and therefore reduce checkout abandonment, increasing sales and repeat customers".

UTILISE EMAILS

Since the emergence of social media as a marketing platform, attention has waned on the opportunities that email presents. The rollout of GDPR (Global Data Protection Regulation) means that every single person who receives your emails has opted in to do so, so ignore its potential at your peril. From weekly stock updates to community noticeboards, the variety of content you can include in your outgoing emails is limitless – so get creative!

Your website host will most likely have email options as part of a package, but to really maximise the potential of email, marketing experts recommend stepping out of Gmail-style systems into providers such as MailChimp and CampaignMonitor. These come with perks including templates and customisation, so you can be confident that your mail-outs fit with your established aesthetic.

Once you've chosen the provider which best suits your business, it's time to get your database up to scratch. Attract customer email addresses by offering something tangible, be it an exclusive discount or a special recipe, or tap into their desire to be part of something by inviting them to be member of a 'club'. Get the message out on your social channels, pop a sign-up sheet on your counter, and host and attend events.

CASH IN ON THE PERSONAL TOUCH

The days of batch-sending generic content is over; instead, look to your sales reports, check out the latest trends and think seasonally in order to make your words really speak to current – and new – customers.

If your website has e-commerce capabilities, it's worth stepping beyond weekly newsletters if you want to really maximise sales. If you're spotting a trend for customers filling their online baskets then leaving your site without paying, consider sending them a polite nudge – it might be just what's needed to pique their interest again and get them spending. "Cart abandonment emails are vital for generating sales as they reignite a consumer's interest," explains Ciaran. "For every cart abandonment email that is sent, an average of $8.21 is generated in revenue." Ciaran's advice: "Don't wait too long to get in contact. Studies show that emails that are sent within one to two hours of when a user leaves a site drive 105% more revenue than if you were to wait 24 hours to send the same email."

For more expert advice on boosting your online presence, download the free *Ultimate Guide To Online Retail* report from the *Speciality Food* website

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lunch! 2021

The popular food-to-go trade show is back at ExCeL London from 23rd-24th September, and is set to be more vibrant and valuable than ever

Lunch! is back for its 14th edition, and this year's event is set to be a must-visit event for all retail buyers looking for the latest trends and products to stock within the food-to-go sector. It's not for nothing that the event has won the title of Best UK Trade Show three times; lunch! is widely regarded as the go-to British event for cafés, coffee shops and food-to-go operations.

Its co-location with Casual Dining and Commercial Kitchen promises retail, foodservice and hospitality buyers an unmissable two-day showcase of the latest innovations in food, drink, packaging and equipment products.

A vibrant exhibitor line up

There are a number of big brands returning to the exhibition space, from Innocent, Rombouts Coffee, Cawston Press and Hippeas to Tony's Chocolonely and Soho Sandwich Company Limited, and plenty of new exhibitors to whet the appetite of visitors including Mindful Snacker, HiP, OmniPork, Peter's Yard and Unrooted Drinks.

The event's biggest ever Start Up Zone will feature freshly-launched start-up businesses, while a number of brand new products will be launched into the market at the event by businesses including Luker Chocolate, Zess, Driver's Pickles, Delice de France, Ruby's Food Products, Waterbomb Ltd and Sigma Alimentos Europe.

Alongside the 300 brands exhibiting at the event, visitors can discover even more exciting products by visiting the Innovation Challenge Gallery: a prestigious competition which showcases the best food and drink products launched in the past 12 months, with finalists pitching to a judging panel of industry buyers live on stage.





Inspiring expert speaker sessions

lunch! is known for the roster of high-profile industry names who share their expertise on-stage, and this year will see an even more impressive array. The Keynote Speaker programme will be taking place across three stages and is free to attend for all visitors to the show.

During the Keynote sessions, founders and decision makers at some of the UK's most-loved food-to-go destinations – including Neil Lake, MD of Costa Coffee; Marta Pogroszewska, MD of GAIL's Bakery; Roger Whiteside, CEO of Greggs; and itsu's newly appointed UK CEO, Ganan Kanagathurai – will be sharing their knowledge and advice gleaned from years at the top of the food-to-go sector.

Other speakers at the event include Russell Simson, operations director of LEON; Hannah Munns, head of Market Street strategy, innovation and concept development at Morrisons; Kate Nicholls, chief executive of UKHospitality; and Jim Winship, director of the British Sandwich & Food to Go Association, lunch!'s main show partner.

With coffee an increasingly vital element of the food-to-go scene, lunch! is proud to host Keynote sessions dedicated to this growing market. The Coffee Shop Keynotes Theatre has been relocated to its biggest stage yet and will host talks and panels featuring a number of innovators and experts including Hannah McKay, head of food and beverages at Caffé Nero, The Gentlemen Baristas and Anya Marco, The Coffee Queen.

Registration for lunch! 2021 is free and strictly for members of the trade only. To register for your free trade pass visit lunchshow.co.uk.

> "I'm really excited to be attending lunch! and to have the industry come back together, which is critical as we collectively focus on safely emerging stronger from this pandemic"
>
> **NEIL LAKE, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF COSTA AND LUNCH! 2021 KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: ExCeL London
WHEN: 23rd-24th September
WEB: lunchshow.co.uk
TWITTER: @lunchexhibition



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COVID-FRIENDLY UPSELLING TIPS

Many shoppers remain wary of samples, but there are practical steps that cheesemongers can take to boost sales during the pandemic



Before Covid, offering samples was a fundamental part of running a cheese counter. "Customers really do appreciate the opportunity to taste different cheeses and learn more about their origins and flavours from an expert," says Candice Fonseca, proprietor at Delifonseca. This one-to-one service was a key sales tool which nudged customers out of their comfort zones and helped them pair up cheeses with tasty accompaniments – all leading to higher sales for cheesemongers.

When Covid-19 put an end to sampling, those manning the counter had to get creative – and verbose. "We were not offering samples for quite a while, relying instead on our amazing employees' ability to describe the cheeses perfectly," Izaak Edge, manager of The CheeseWorks in Cheltenham.

Although easing Covid restrictions mean many shops have resumed sampling, there will be a number of customers who prefer to keep their masks firmly in place. To cater to these customers, cheesemongers can up the ante with their in-store displays.

According to Candice, the first step is to ensure your counter looks mouth-wateringly good. "It's essential that the cheese counter is bountiful, and we favour a display with larger chunks of cheese rather than large quantities of smaller pieces. Visually, this makes a real impact and makes the overall counter look full and attractive." Izaak agrees that a well-stocked counter has the power to wow customers. "We make the most of our displays by having a stacked cheese counter be the first thing that a potential customer sees as soon as they walk into the shop. Once they've taken this amazing sight in, they start to look around the rest of the shop, finding rows upon rows of chutney, alcohol, fresh bread and other accompaniments."

Tell-all signage

Making products look as attractive and as interesting as possible is a good start to pique the interest of customers. Next, ensure cheeses are correctly labelled with all of the information a customer might want to know. With the busy Christmas season on the way, a detailed display can help answer customers' questions when staff are busy taking orders and cutting cheeses. "Signage is a big part of our cheese displays," Candice says, "and we believe in sharing as much information as possible to make the experience as simple for the customer as it can be. We share the country of origin, and for UK cheeses we specify the area. We also clarify whether it's pasteurised or unpasteurised and whether the cheese is suitable for vegetarians," she says. "We've found that many of our vegetarian customers are appreciative of this clear guidance, and we've certainly seen an increase in demand for cheese that doesn't include any animal produce."

Izaak also makes sure his cheeses are well labelled with all of the necessary information. "The same goes for any of the crackers or chutneys we sell, too – though the makers help us out greatly with these by providing all the information generally needed on the items themselves," he says.

Perfect positioning

Choosing a display set-up is another crucial step for cheesemongers. Whether you have an entire shop to fill or just a single deli counter, positioning items smartly can do much of the heavy lifting of upselling. For instance, try providing a display with your favourite cheeseboard selection, creating a section packed with all your local products or setting a few of your bestselling chutneys and preserves next to the cheeses they pair with best.

"Product positioning is extremely important in our shop," says Izaak. "There are several key positions in the shop where we make sure one of our bestsellers is situated, or something that happens to be a little special or particularly good at the time of year. When a customer comes in, they'll instantly be drawn to it, as it is in their direct line of sight," he continues. "When working in such a specific field as this with products that are slightly off the beaten track, we find it pays to make it as visually interesting as possible."

> "When working in such a specific field as this with products that are slightly off the beaten track, we find it pays to make displays as visually interesting as possible"

While staging bestsellers front and centre seems like an obvious move, Candice prefers to shout about the more obscure cheeses. "We rotate our cheeses on a regular basis, giving our lesser-known products an opportunity to take centre stage. Our big sellers will always do well so we tend to focus on showcasing the lesser known, more unusual types of cheese that may not be so widely available."

Smaller cheesemongers and delis may not have as much room to play with, so Candice recommends prioritising displays that house the bigger blocks of cheese and choosing standout items that will get shoppers talking. "Customers will always ask for the more affordable, everyday cheeses like Cheddar, Mozzarella and Parmesan so do have these stocked, but regulars will enjoy a rotation of cheeses giving them a new option on every visit." By combining these display tips with a fantastic knowledge of cheese flavour and provenance, sample-shy customers will be coming back for more.



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CHEESE UNCUT

New retail perspectives from industry experts

"Reasons to be cheeseful"



JAMES GRANT
NO2 POUND STREET

The pandemic has changed the face of retail on many levels. One thing for certain is that we are a lot stronger and wiser when it comes to running small businesses. The high streets are changing. Now more than ever, we need to embrace and shout out small producers. The general public are beginning to realise that there are far superior food and drink offerings on their doorsteps to that available at the supermarkets.

At No2 we only sell artisan British cheese. This cheese is not sold in the supermarkets, partly due to supply but mostly because the cheesemakers are content with being subsistent. It is our duty as cheesemongers to keep promoting and supporting these cheesemakers. The dawn of the circular economy is upon us, and if we can help to conserve and avoid wastage by buying from small producers surely this is a good thing. Did any of you pick up on the amount of waste that was found at the Dunfermline Amazon warehouse that targets 130,000 items a week for destruction? Just one of the few shocking environmental stories of the last seven months. Don't get me started on supermarkets. Super? Really? New small cheesemakers are popping up all over the UK which is surely a positive sign for the artisan cheese market. By embracing social media No2 has found new producers. Most importantly by talking to the cheesemakers and good producers I have learnt so much about what is happening in their artisan worlds – who the new kids on the block are, etc.

It is high time that we all had something to celebrate, and as one of my contemporaries said to me recently, "this is a golden age for British Cheese". I agree that things have come along way since industrialisation and mass produced cheese. However, today's new artisan producers number less than half of what we had pre World Wars. So, in my opinion the golden age is yet to come and those golden nuggets that are shining now will form part of a beautiful golden landscape in the next few years. Shouting out about your produce is the way forward. Your knowledge is key to your shop's success. Our audience want to know and understand their food. Way back we all knew where our food came from so why not now? Let us say goodbye to faceless producers and mass produced garbage. There are reasons to be cheeseful coming to a high street near you soon, if you want them.

> "We need to embrace small producers"

Godminster launches Daredevil Chilli Cheddar

Somerset-based cheesemakers Godminster have created their first new cheese innovation since Black Truffle in 2019 with Daredevil Chilli Vintage Organic Cheddar. The cheese, which features caramelised onions and garlic as well as punchy Daredevil chilli flavour encased in a scarlet truckle, has been in development for more than a year.

"The Godminster team have spent their lockdown cooking up something special and we're delighted to share it with the world in true daredevil fashion," says Jessica Kimber-Holloway, commercial and operations director and 13 year veteran of the award-winning cheese company.

A team of seven Godminster staff members will take to the skies to 'launch' the new product at 15,000 feet. "We've called it Daredevil for the fiery British chillies in the Cheddar which are rated between 30,000 to 50,000 on the Scoville scale. It seemed fitting that we launch it in a suitably daredevil way!" Jessica added.

The launch comes as part of Godminster's fundraising efforts for mental health charity Mind in Somerset, and will take place alongside new mental health training for the team. "Lockdown was undeniably a difficult period for everyone and mental health issues are now more important than ever," says Sarah Norris, senior marketing manager. "That's why as part of our launch we decided to do a 'daredevil' fundraiser for Mind in Somerset. Jumping out of a plane with a 'Daredevil' Chilli Cheddar means a lot of us are facing our biggest fears. It's scary, it's exciting, it's a little bit crazy... but most importantly it's for a good cause!"

The Daredevil Chilli Vintage Organic Cheddar will be available for speciality shops to order directly from Godminster and from wholesalers in September.



NEWS IN BRIEF

NED PALMER PUBLISHES BRITISH ISLES CHEESE COMPENDIUM

After cutting his teeth in the cheese industry at Borough Market and Neal's Yard Dairy, cheese expert Ned Palmer gained acclaim for his bestseller *A Cheesemonger's History of the British Isles*. Now, he will introduce readers to 158 fine cheeses from Britain and Ireland in *A Cheesemonger's Compendium of British and Irish Cheese*, which will be published 7th October. Each cheese mentioned in the book is accompanied by a brief account of its history or folklore and a description of its flavour.

BIG CHEESE BRANDS MOVE TO RECYCLABLE PACKAGING

Dairylea and Philadelphia cheese brands will now be sold in recyclable packaging as part of Mondelēz International's strategy to use 100% recyclable packaging by 2025. "Snacking Made Right means making our products with packaging people can recycle, it means making decisions for the long term that enable a circular economy," said Louise Stigant, UK managing director. It comes as research by Ecotone UK reveals that the recyclability of food and drink packaging plays an important role in whether a consumer will pick up a product from the shelf, with 78% of consumers interested in recycling more and 61% wanting to use less single-use plastic.

SCOTLAND'S **DAIRY** FARMERS HAVE SET A **TARGET** TO **BOOST** THE INDUSTRY'S **ECONOMIC** VALUE FROM **£800M** A YEAR TO **£1.4BN**

SOURCE: SCOTLAND FOOD & DRINK



Global Feta market to reach $15bn

Crumbly, salty Feta cheese has always been a firm favourite in the UK, and it appears its popularity is set to grow around the world over the coming years as new research finds its global market value is expected to rise by more than $5bn.



According to a report published by Allied Market Research, the value of the Feta sector will reach $15.6bn globally by 2028, up from $10.5bn in 2019, with a compound annual growth rate of 5.7%.

Although it already has a strong global reputation, Feta saw a further boost this year after a 2018 Finnish recipe for Feta pasta went viral on TikTok, causing sales to boom around the world. In fact, the popularity of the viral video caused many retailers, both independents and chains alike, to be hit by supply constraints, leading to Feta shortages. Even TikTok's general manager for North America, Sandie Hawkins, recently admitted to making the Feta pasta after viewing the viral videos – although she told the Associated Press she had to visit several stores before finding one that had Feta in stock.

Cheshire cheesemaker creates 60 jobs amid 'record growth'

Nantwich-based cheese business Joseph Heler is expanding its business as it seeks to hire 60 new employees at its headquarters across production, including cheesemaking, packing, grating, waxing and blending roles. It comes after the business achieved record growth and prepares for the busy Christmas season.

"As we prepare for our annual peak, we are recruiting to keep up with demand and support our continued development," said managing director George Heler. "We recognise the part our team has played in keeping the food industry going throughout the Covid-19 pandemic," he continued. "Together we have been resilient, regardless of the challenges we faced."

PAIRING IDEAS



DANIEL WILLIAMS
GODFREY C WILLIAMS & SON

WHAT'S ON YOUR DREAM CHEESEBOARD?
Belton Farm Red Fox, Appleby's Cheshire, Burt's Blue, Rosary Goat's Cheese, Sharpham Brie.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE CHEESE PAIRING?
Hot Cross Buns with very mild Belton Farm White Cheshire. We request a special batch that is 6-8 weeks old, as the milky, lemony flavours combine with the hot cross bun spices so well!

ANY UNUSUAL PAIRINGS YOU'D RECOMMEND?
Blue Cheese & Sticky Toffee Pudding. I don't think it's going to become a 'classic' pairing, but it's an interesting exercise in how savoury, sweet, and spices can combine to create something unexpectedly delicious!

WHAT ABOUT DRINKS?
Our shop has built an unbeatable range of English Wines. My top pairings: Simpsons Rabbit Hole Pinot Noir 2020 with Red Fox, Dalwood's Still White 2019 with Sharpham Brie, and Balfour's Pink Fizz in a Can with Feltham Farm's La Fresca Margarita.



PARTNER CONTENT



INTRODUCING BELTON'S RED FOX FAMILY

Belton Farm's popular Red Fox is now available in three distinctive variants, all sure to maintain the classic's best-seller crown

Made using carefully selected starter cultures and a unique recipe developed over many years, Belton Farm's Red Fox family offers a decidedly different proposition to the British cheese market – welcoming new customers to the world of territorials.

An aged Red Leicester with a cunningly unexpected crunch, the classic Red Fox boasts a complex blend of sweet, savoury and nutty flavours. It stands out on the cheese counter thanks to its eye-catching russet colour and charms customers old and new as a result of its watchful maturation, leaving the palate with a lingering flavour and desire for more.



Newly-launched Smoked Red Fox shares Red Fox's rugged mouth-feel with a satisfying crunch, and offers something new for the discerning palate. Hand-selected Red Fox cheese is cold smoked over oak chips for 10 hours to produce Smoked Red Fox, which offers an authentic, delicate smoky flavour that pairs perfectly with its well-balanced sweet, savoury and nutty notes.

Meanwhile, White Fox – an aged White Leicester – offers cheese lovers something a little different within the British cheese portfolio. Its slow maturation provides a depth of flavour that is hard to beat and a versatility that is second to none, as well as a satisfying crunch.

Red Fox has been a staple of the cheeseboard for quite some time, and its impressive consumer awareness and engagement has been further driven with its very own TV advert which promotes Belton Farm's 'There's More To Cheese Than Cheddar' campaign. This message encourages customers to discover something new by experimenting with Red Fox in their recipes to ignite their taste buds. Alison Taylor, marketing manager at Belton Farm says, "Red Fox has been hugely successful, we have seen the brand go from strength to strength. The new naturally Smoked Red Fox delivers a new dimension to an already iconic cheese, a great addition to our portfolio of award-winning Great British Cheese."

beltonfarm.co.uk

"Red Fox has been hugely successful, we have seen the brand go from strength to strength. The new naturally Smoked Red Fox delivers a new dimension to an already iconic cheese, a great addition to our portfolio of award-winning Great British Cheese"





SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL CHRISTMAS

CHEESE TRADING

Discover stocking tips and display advice for the ultimate Yuletide sales boost

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THE EAST LONDON CHEESE BOARD



LISA KERR
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KEVIN BEER
MILLBROOK DAIRY COMPANY

Cheesemongers' busiest season is nearly upon us, and following a year which saw many new customers welcomed into the artisan cheese fold, showcasing the best of the classics and lesser-known varieties will be of the utmost importance. As orders are placed and Christmas-themed displays are dreamt up, *Speciality Food* asks the experts how to prepare for the festive season in 2021.

Selling the classics

At Christmastime, cheesemongers know that seasonal favourites like Stilton or clothbound Cheddar can essentially sell themselves. But bringing fresh eyes to classic cheeses can result in a welcome uplift in sales. "Stilton is well known to be at its best at Christmas due to the late summer pastures that the cows graze, giving the milk a richness unparalleled at other times of the year," explains Robin Skailes, chairman of the Stilton Cheesemakers Association and director of Cropwell Bishop Creamery. A trio of Stilton, a hard crumbly cheese such as Lancashire and a West Country Farmhouse Cheddar is a must-have, but when it comes to accompaniments, try straying from the beaten path this year. "With Stilton most people automatically think of Port," Robin says, but he has some other suggestions up his sleeve. "How about a Sauterne dessert wine? Riesling is a little different too, and it pairs really well due to its nice, crisp taste and finish." Retailers can also boost the value of Stilton by explaining to customers how it can be used outside of the cheeseboard. "Stilton is a versatile ingredient which can inspire and brighten up everyday dishes – from soups to souffles, risottos, salads, sandwiches and burgers," Robin adds.

In addition to Stilton, other seasonal bestsellers at George & Joseph include Brie and Wensleydale. "We stick to our year-round favourites which are Baron Bigod, Stichelton and Richard II Wensleydale," says founder Stephen Fleming. "We also get through a lot of Vacherin Mont d'Or, which is on perfect form at Christmas." With blues like Stichelton, Stephen says retailers can get sales buzzing by pairing with Pedro Ximenez sherry. "The super-sticky, concentrated raisin flavours of the sherry is a great foil for the saltiness of the Stichelton," he says. And with decadent Baron Bigod, he suggests Single Variety Co Fireflame Chilli Jam. "Not too much heat from the chilli jam, but a great contrast with the creaminess of the Brie." Another favourite accompaniment is Rosebud Preserves Fig Chutney. "It pairs brilliantly with most cheeses, so it's a good all-round choice to put with a cheeseboard," Stephen says.

Eye-catching displays

From stocking unusual, striking goats' cheese pyramids and rolls from the likes of St Tola Ash or Cerney Ash, to creating convenient grab-and-go hampers, there are plenty of ways to catch customers' eyes this year. "We find that over Christmas people like to be a bit more extravagant with their cheese purchases than they would on a regular weekly cheese shop," says Fraser MacLellan of The East London





Cheese Board and Froth & Rind cheese shop in London. Ahead of the holidays, he stocks up on Gruyère washed in red wine and truffle Brie.

Traditional cheeses can also be ramped up with a bit of theatre that gets customers talking to one another, Stephen says. "We definitely find the 'theatrical' nature of selling some cheeses – like the large cutting versions of Vacherin Mont d'Or and Gorgonzola Dolce – works," he says. "We have these on the top of our counter and spoon out the Gorgonzola. Whenever we do this we find customers selling to each other – 'what's that you're getting?' – which really helps create excitement!"

"We also find that displays are a great focal point," Fraser adds, "so we'll have whole Comté, Cheddars, and large wedges all arranged for the customer to see. We make sure we give lots of tastings too, both to help the sale but also to help the customer make an informed choice. We want the cheese we sell to make people happy so it's imperative that they leave the shop with cheese they like or want."

Avril Molloy, founder of the Irish School of Cheese urges cheesemongers to take their offering up another notch with a Christmas cheeseboard event – held either online or in person. "You could have quite a broad reach by advertising it on social media and in your shop. Have one of your mongers on a video, or even circulate a recorded video on YouTube, to give customers ideas of how to put together a really nice Christmas cheeseboard," she says.

Less is more

While Stephen encourages customers to "go big or go home" with regards to how much cheese they buy – "We always get some customers who buy their Christmans cheese, then come in the next day looking a bit sheepish, saying they didn't buy enough or they already ate it all" – when it comes to choosing what to stock, less can be more. Avril also warns cheesemongers against adding too many novelties to their range, such as cheesemaking kits or raclettes. "My experience is that unless you're in the center of London or a very busy city, they don't sell that well. People really just want the cheese and the food." Instead, stock up on lesser-known, local-to-you varieties this year. "People will latch onto the local cheeses even more this year," Avril says. "People want to shop locally, and they may not realise that there's a beautiful UK or Irish cheese similar to one that might have come from France."

Stephen agrees that the 'less is more' mentality can be a winning sales technique. "We try to steer customers away from buying lots of small pieces and towards buying more of three to five cheeses. We stick to our year-round range, so we don't bring in cheeses that we're not familiar with at Christmas. This means we are selling cheeses that we're knowledgeable about, so we sell more that way, rather than putting on loads of new products just for Christmas," he says.

However, gifting can be a lucrative business for those who are able to tap into it. "We put together Christmas cheese selections," Fraser says. "These are very popular in the shop. We add some ribbon and bows to make them look a bit more gift-like. We also have a cheese and beer box where customers get three cheeses, each of which is paired with a beer, and the box contains two each of the paired beers. This is a very popular gift." And with the clock already ticking, Stephen says having example gift hampers made up can help secure sales ahead of the Christmas rush. "The power of suggestion works here – we take the hassle out of gifting."

Following last year's online cheese bonanza, retailers can look forward to another year of healthy sales as consumers come together for gatherings and parties and celebrate reconnecting with friends and family.

> "Stilton is well known to be at its best at Christmas due to the late summer pastures that the cows graze, giving the milk a richness unparalleled at other times of the year"

> "People will latch onto the local cheeses even more this year"

ALTERNATIVE PAIRING IDEAS



Kevin Beer, director and co-founder of Millbrook Dairy Company takes us through new and delicious pairing suggestions

At Millbrook Dairy we think everyone should break with tradition. Rather than passing the Port over your Christmas cheeseboard, we think you should pass the Highland Malt Whiskey! Millbrook's 1057 Scottish Extra Mature Cheddar and a 'wee dram' of Highland Malt Whiskey is the perfect way to round off a festive feast.

Another winning combination for retailers to consider offering to discerning customers is Millbrook's 1057 Cheddar and cider. There's a long tradition of pairing cider with cheese and many good reasons to consider drinking it in place of wine.

As for food combinations, there is one we can't get enough of at Millbrook Dairy, and that's cheese and fruit. These two food groups are a marriage made in heaven and offer retailers the opportunity to drive an uplift on sales. Millbrook's 1057 pairs beautifully with festive fruits including apricots, figs, cranberries, pears, raisins... the list goes on. Another classic combination for retailers to showcase is Millbrook's 1057 Cheddar with an array of festive nuts, including walnuts, almonds, pistachios and pecans. Or why not bring these two combinations together and try Millbrook's 1057 Cheddar with a slice of delicious fruit cake?

CREATE THE ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS CHEESEBOARD



Rowcliffe's marketing manager Lisa Kerr offers the best selection for a must-have cheeseboard

BLUE: COLSTON BASSETT STILTON
One of the smallest Stilton makers, which is unrivalled in the UK. Colston delivers a mellow flavour with melt-in-the-mouth texture and no sharp acidic taste.

GOAT: JACQUIN FLOWER AND HONEY GOAT LOG
This is a fresh goat's cheese with honey and dried flower petals such as roses, cornflower and marigolds.

WASHED RIND: AMBROSI TALEGGIO
A semi-soft compact cheese in a quadrangular shape, made from whole cow's milk. Sweet, aromatic and with a hint of a truffle aftertaste.

CHEDDAR: WESTCOMBE CHEDDAR
A truly artisan Somerset Cheddar made from fresh unpasteurised cow's milk and aged for 12-18 months. It has a firm texture with complex flavours and long-lasting notes of citrus, hazelnut and caramel.

SOFT/BRIE: BARON BIGOD
A traditional farmhouse Brie-de-Meaux-style cheese, handmade using their own raw grass-fed Montbeliarde cow's milk. Creamy, smooth texture with long, warm, earthy and mushroom flavours.

BLENDED: CLEMENCY HALL TRULY TRUFFLE
Mature Cheddar with flecks of black truffle and a delicate flavour profile.





LE GRUYÈRE® SWITZERLAND AOP

CHRISTMAS COUNTER MUST HAVE

No Christmas cheeseboard is complete without Le Gruyère AOP. This festive season, share its story for ultimate counter appeal



In family-run village dairies located in the picturesque western cantons of Switzerland, the internationally-renowned cheese Le Gruyère AOP is made by expert hands using skills passed down the generations for centuries.

A heritage cheese

The history of Le Gruyère AOP begins in 1115, when the inhabitants of five neighbouring regions of Switzerland – the town of Gruyères in the Canton of Fribourg, Vaud, Neuchâtel, Jura and Bern – transformed the milk of their cattle herds into cheese. In the 900 years since then, the knowledge and techniques established by its original makers have been upheld to the delight of cheese lovers across the world. By 1762 the cheese was officially named and its provenance noted in the dictionary of the Académie Française, but despite this, the style of the Le Gruyère AOP was often imitated to create lesser-quality wheels until – following discussions held across Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – it was awarded AOC (Controlled Designation of Origin) accreditation across Switzerland then certified AOP (Protected Designation of Origin) across Europe.

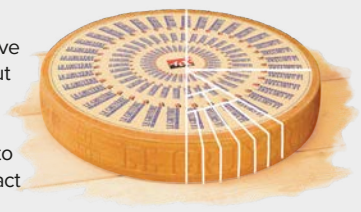
The 170 dairies which produce Le Gruyère AOP are expected to uphold the rigid specifications set by the accreditation at every stage of the production process, from the cows producing the milk to the ageing of the cheese – keeping the high quality and unique, delicious flavour of Le Gruyère AOP consistent.

Unique and versatile for all ages

This consistent flavour has played a huge part in earning and maintaining the worldwide popularity of Le Gruyère AOP, as well as numerous awards. Its distinctive yet subtle flavours are both unique and versatile, making it popular with consumers of all ages as well as delicious served in a number of ways, from a flavourful addition to a cheeseboard to melted in a fondue.

HOW TO CUT LE GRUYÈRE AOP

Cut the wheel in half using a cheesewire then cut into quarters using a double-handled knife – halve these quarters into eighths, then cut the top half into three wedges and the bottom into six slices. Wrap the cut portions with clingfilm in order to avoid the cheese getting into contact with the air.



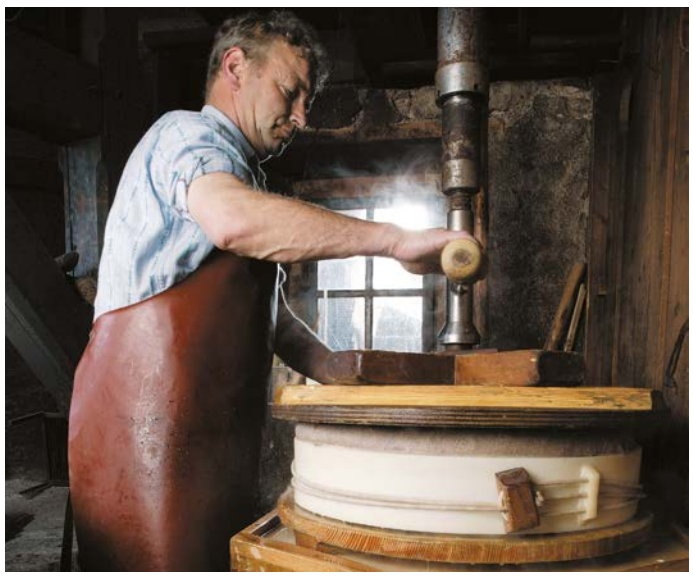
TASTING NOTES

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

- **Le Gruyère AOP Classic** (aged six-nine months) is nutty, sweet and refined – delicious melted and popular with fans of mild cheeses
- **Le Gruyère AOP Réserve** (aged 10 months and up) is aromatic and full of flavour – its complex, mature flavours make it a popular choice for a cheeseboard
- **Le Gruyère AOP** can also be purchased aged 18 and 24 months – both options showcase a well-balanced but powerful taste

DID U KNOW

LE GRUYÈRE AOP – AS WELL AS THE TOWN AND REGION FROM WHICH THE CHEESE ORIGINATES – IS NAMED AFTER A CRANE, ORGRUE IN FRENCH, WHICH PURPORTEDLY LANDED ON THE SHOULDER OF THE WARLORD WHO FOUNDED THE CIVILISATION. YOU CAN SEE DEPICTIONS OF IT ON THE STATUES, FLAGS AND DOORWAYS OF EVERY VILLAGE IN THE AREA, AND ON SEVERAL WHEELS OF THE CHEESE.



> Le Gruyère AOP's distinctive yet subtle flavours are both unique and versatile, making it popular with consumers of all ages as well as delicious served in a number of ways

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ETHIOPIAN FOOD

Curious cooks, spice lovers and vegans are looking to the Horn of Africa for inspiration, says Sally-Jayne Wright

Mountainous, landlocked Ethiopia shares borders with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and south Sudan. We've known for decades it produces sublime Arabica coffee and now it's being appreciated for its cooking, too.

Waitrose magazine named Ethiopia as one of its tastes of 2021. In September, online retailer Tastesmiths launches its Ethiopian curry kit.

A year after the first lockdown, a *BBC Good Food* writer suggested that instead of sourdough, readers might like to have a go at making injera – Ethiopia's staple of fermented pancake.

AT A STREET FOOD STALL IN LONDON, I TASTED A STEW MADE FROM SPICED CHICKPEA FLOUR. IS ETHIOPIAN COOKING ALL 'FAMINE FOOD' LIKE THAT?

Depends on your viewpoint. In Celia Brooks Brown's *World Vegetarian Classics*, she writes: "In the face of deprivation, and with the blessing of a host of flavourful ingredients from Asian immigrants, a vegetarian cuisine of global significance has evolved."

On about 180 fasting days a year – Ethiopian orthodox Christians abstain from meat, eggs and dairy. This has led to a plethora of imaginative pulse and vegetable dishes.

WHAT ARE THE KEY INGREDIENTS?

A spiced clarified butter called niter kibbeh, berbere spice mix, peanuts, chickpeas, spinach, pumpkin and cornmeal, as well as injera or sourdough flatbreads made from teff.

OH YES, TEFF. THE GRAIN USED IN THOSE SOUR PANCAKES THAT LOOK LIKE TRIPE WHICH THEY USE AS EDIBLE PLATES.

Teff is actually a tiny seed high in prebiotic fibre, magnesium, phosphorus, manganese, iron and a source of potassium, C and B vitamins. It's gluten-free, contains 12 grams of protein per 100g of product and is grown in the US as well as Ethiopia.

REMIND ME WHAT'S IN BERBERE SPICE?

It's like garam masala; everyone's recipe is slightly different. The mix sold at Spice Mountain in London's Borough Market contains black pepper, paprika, fenugreek, allspice, ajowan (Bishop's Weed), ginger, cumin, coriander, chilli powder, nutmeg, cloves, cardamom and bird's eye chillies.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE TREND?

With real life travel trickier, foodies are exploring exotic cultures via their stove tops. Vegan meals are up 45% and vegetarian 25% year-on-year (Kantar), and Ethiopian recipes are ideal for plant-based eating.

DON'T ETHIOPIANS EAT MEAT?

They most certainly do. In fact, kitfo or steak tartare with spiced clarified butter is one of their most famous dishes. Spice Mountain recommends trying berbere in a slow-cooked lamb shank stew, and *Trend Watch* has used it to give cottage pie a twist.

IS THERE A DOWNSIDE?

Ethiopian cuisine is highly aromatic; dominant flavours include fenugreek and korerima or false cardamom, which consumers either love or hate. Kayleigh Davies of thespicery.com in Bristol said reviews for their Ethiopian spiced recipes were "a bit Marmite". A vegan herself, she loves this kind of food.

Teff products and Ethiopian coffee are not cheap, which reflects their superior nutrition and quality.

WHAT DRINKS ARE TYPICAL?

Africa's largest producer of honey puts 80% of it into tej, or mead (fermented honey wine). If you can't find imported tej, try a local mead producer such as Peckham-based Gosnell's.

Ethiopia is thought to be where coffee was discovered, though Yemen may be where coffee was first drunk. There are three main types: forest or wild coffee, plantation or intensively cultivated, and garden or small-scale homestead – where most beans come from. Flavour notes range from citrus, to floral, to tropical fruit.

WHOSE PRODUCTS DO YOU RECOMMEND?

Buna Oromia Coffee can supply a variety of organic single estate coffees. Try also London Coffee Roasters or The Ethiopian Coffee Company.

Edinburgh roaster, Lucky Beans, won two Great Taste Award stars last year for their Lucky Ethiopia Yirgacheffe Dumerso coffee. The Yirgacheffe region is famous for very aromatic, light and elegant coffee.

> "Vegan meals are up 45% and vegetarian 25% year on year (Kantar), and Ethiopian recipes are ideal for plant-based eating"

Lovegrass Ltd make an excellent Ethiopian teff penne pasta which won a Food Matters Live award in 2018 and also a Free From Award in 2019. Their Crispy Teff Flakes are offered on Ocado.

Tobia Teff supply products from teff grown in Spain; *Trend Watch* greatly enjoyed their gluten-free teff bread – delicious with cheese – and their ready-made injera crepes.

Dove's Farm, Lovegrass, Tobia Teff and Suma produce teff flour.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE TREND

- Delight customers by putting Ethiopian stews on your café menu
- Consider injera-making classes and videos
- Display spice kits and teff flour alongside cookbooks such as *Ethiopia: Recipes and Traditions from the Horn of Africa* by Yohanis Gebreyesus

WILL THE TREND LAST?

Come the winter lockdown – if there is one – we predict that former sourdough enthusiasts will be comparing their injeras on Instagram, provided they can get teff flour. There's an art to perfecting them, which is half the attraction.

Alex Whitehouse, CEO of Premier Foods, who commissioned the *Kitchen Cooking Index Report* into mealtime trends (YouGov and Kantar, February 2021) said, "One of the most striking trends, one we saw before the pandemic and one which will likely continue long after it, is the desire for big bold flavours and tastes."

You can't get much bigger and bolder than Ethiopian.



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WHAT CHANGING CONSUMER ATTITUDES MEAN FOR FINE FOOD

Health and wellness, local ingredients and provenance, and the overall quality of food and drink is guiding consumer decision-making and demands in today's industry, says Natasha Spencer-Jolliffe

COMMENTATORS



ANNE JORUN AAS
FARMFORCE



COLINE LAURENT
CONNECTING FOOD



MEENESH MISTRY
WHOLEY MOLY

Major issues have been raised in the food industry and the food supply chain during the Covid-19 outbreak. As a result, these are now at the forefront of the industry's innovations, initiatives and investments. "People seem to have increased their preference of a healthy diet to protect themselves and their immune systems, food safety and food security have gained more attention, and food sustainability problems have become much more visible and urgent," explains Anne Jorun Aas, chief executive officer of Farmforce.

Technology is playing an increasingly prevalent role in gathering and sharing information throughout the supply chain too – and will continue to guide strategies in the post-Covid landscape. "The expectations for transparency are growing, so we expect to see more fine food brands exploring how they can respond to these new demands post-Covid," reveals Coline Laurent, marketing and communications manager of Connecting Food.

While the issues affecting today's industry are complex, we are witnessing how real progress can be made when brands consider the bigger picture beyond their bottom line, recognise and document what is and is not effective, and take actions to improve those that are not working.

"In the height of the pandemic, consumers were looking for indulgent moments from their fine food – which would act as a treat in replacement for the lack of socialising and normal life," shares Meenesh Mistry, co-founder of natural, gluten-free and refined sugar-free cookie brand Wholey Moly. "We are seeing that continue post lockdown," highlights Mistry.

Here, we explore three of the leading demands shaping and shifting our food and drink industry, and that we can expect to see evolve in the post-lockdown and post-Covid eras:

Health and Wellness

Health, wellness and functionality are increasingly sought-after by conscious consumers who want their food and drink to contain nutritional, immune-boosting and health-focused properties. Although the rise of health and wellness was a prominent trend before Covid-19, the pandemic has sped up shoppers' desire for healthier choices. Shoppers are willing to pay a premium price point to support their health and wellness, with products' overall functionality a key purchasing consideration.

Immunity products are thriving in the functional food and drinks market, with brands subsequently centring their premium efforts on claims that actively provide functional benefits. We are seeing this in the rise of products such as prebiotics, probiotics and protein enrichment. Improving gut health is a growing area of interest to health-seeking consumers. Increasingly shoppers want to combine health and nutrition, showcasing the rising awareness and adoption of the food as a preventative medicine trend.

> "There is a greater interest in how retailers and brands interact with various stakeholders along the value chain, including farming communities"

Overall, consumers are now more aware of their health and immune system, and therefore seek functional food to support their goals. This heightened awareness can come in several facets, Jorun Aas reveals: "Some turn to newer options around food and drink for shorter-term immediate, tangible effects; some are looking to superfood ingredients or new technologies that deliver nutrients to get 'healthy' efficiently; others again are looking at altogether new ways of approaching eating to support their mental health." Fine food providers are having to learn more about their target consumers' needs and cater directly to these demands.

Innovation and sustainability

We are seeing continued innovation and expansion in the immune space. Products are evolving from health supplements and packaged goods to immune-boosting properties with more specific ingredients and benefits. A growing body of research into immune health will drive interest in its benefits. Personalised nutrition strongly resonates with consumers as they search for functional foods and specialised advanced nutrition advice.

"When it comes to the wellness aspect, many consumers see an overlap between wellbeing and tackling sustainability challenges, and therefore make food and drink choices to support issues such as the environment," says Jorun Aas. The rapidly increasing supply of plant-based options to meet vegan, vegetarian and flexitarian diet preferences brings this to the fore. Increasing concerns around farmer income, child slavery, and deforestation also play a central role in how we think about food and make our purchasing decisions.

"Climate change is having a big say in what consumers are looking for in their food," relays Mistry. "We are seeing a keener interest in plant-based and meat alternative foods which is driving some great

> "Premiumisation and diversification have emerged in perhaps unlikely areas of the food and drink industry due to the pandemic"

innovation in the sector," adds Mistry.

Describing the congruence of health and sustainability as "critical in harnessing interest for robust and bush-proof solutions like Farmforce", Jorun Aas notes that these map farming communities, how food is produced and the sustainability impact of food production.

"The drinks space is where we are seeing the most change in consumer demand for health and wellness," reveals Mistry. "There is huge interest in low and no alcohol, Lucky Saint being a great example, and more on the wellness side, there is an emergence of Kombucha brands and CBD-infused drinks," Mistry adds.

Local, provenance-based shopping

Today's buyers are also curious about the locality and provenance of the goods they purchase. Synonymous with high quality too, food and drink that is both sourced and supplied locally and backed by stories on the roots of the ingredients that make up the finished product are leading the way for premium produce.

Online retail continues to dominate our shopping behaviours as convenience, user experience and delivery options rank high on consumers' wishlists in the current shopping environment. "Lockdown is the main factor that has forced us all to shop more locally," Mistry states.

Locally produced food and direct farm-to-consumer shopping has increased during the pandemic due largely to consumer preferences, Jorun Aas agrees, as a result of "consumers wanting to avoid standing in long queues as well as trade issues such as international transport restrictions, logistics and labour challenges causing import delays and shortages."

The bigger industry players are in a strong position to create highly engaging and successful e-commerce platforms. Yet, local fine food suppliers can emphasise their presence and benefits in this digitally-enhanced food and drink era too. As consumers want local produce, large brands with comprehensive platforms are likely to team up with local fresh food providers to develop an optimised, effective and consumer-focused supply chain.

"Local supply also has the advantages of a shorter supply chain and often more easily accessible information on how the food was produced," outlines Jorun Aas. "Yet, in some developing markets, it has been difficult to document traceability and food safety, and we see increasing demand for Farmforce in those markets – where this was not a concern before the pandemic," Jorun Aas explains.

Consumer demands are continually evolving. "Lately, we are seeing consumers looking beyond just what is good for themselves, and more towards what is good for the food system as a whole, meaning also for the planet and for society," says Laurent. Consumer concerns are all seeking more transparency.

Shopping locally is set to become one of the lasting legacies of the pandemic. In the UK, 91% of consumers who have been shopping locally this past year and throughout the pandemic plan on doing so beyond it, Barclaycard Payments research shows. Supporting independent retailers and smaller businesses like farm shops is a key factor influencing consumers' ongoing interest in shopping close by.

However, 'local' can mean very different things, Laurent expresses, asking: "Do all of the ingredients have to be local? Or only the product processing and manufacturing steps? Is shopping at a local grocery store enough?".

"Given these different definitions for what it means to be local, providing complete transparency on the food products is the best way to ensure consumers can make their own educated choices," highlights Laurent.

Quality at its best

The pandemic has also made consumers reevaluate their purchase priorities. According to a report by McKinsey released in August 2020, Covid-19 has created financial uncertainty for consumers. These unknowns have forced many to shift their focus to essentials like food and cut down purchases of non-essential items. "At the same time, the pandemic has also heightened consumer awareness of health and safety and accelerated the interest and shift to organic, natural and fresh food," relays Jorun Aas. "There is also a greater interest in how retailers and brands interact with various stakeholders along the value chain including farming communities," she highlights.

Amid the pandemic, the Lipstick Effect has the potential to detrimentally impact the fine food sector. After all, consumers are more conscious of cost and value for money, and as such, are making fine food and drink brands work harder for theirs. However, with money concerns elevated, so too are other values that drive our purchasing habits, namely health and wellness, local ingredients that detail their origin, and high-quality produce. Currently, it is these needs that consumers are prioritising and turning to premium food and drink offerings to provide the products, properties and positionings they crave.

The growth of appreciation for local, provenance and quality shows no signs of slowing down. However, the food and drink industry needs to stay up to date with the Lipstick Effect—consumers' tendency to replace big and expensive purchases for smaller, luxurious and treat-based alternatives, amid a crisis — and how it is destined to evolve into a long-term movement.

"The higher the quality of product, the more expectations consumers will have for that product," emphasises Laurent.

Consumers want to access a wide, attractive and well-located selection of premium ingredients to ensure their quality. Consistency in the quality of product purchases is critical to ensure repeat buys from consumers' retailers and brands of choice. As today's consumers are hungry for information, transformation and traceability in our shared food system, they are more comfortable searching for quality produce and utilising third-party platforms, social media and online reviews to undertake their own quality-control strategies.

"Consumers are no longer looking for products that have fancy labels but then cannot document their impact on sustainability and the farming communities where they source from," shares Jorun Aas.

Premiumisation and diversification have even emerged in perhaps unlikely areas of the food and drink industry due to the pandemic. High-end fish products such as scallops and lobsters as well as premium desserts and smoothies are making their way into freezers, further highlighting the permissible indulgence trend and the Lipstick Effect taking hold. The frozen sector is also expected to see rising numbers of pre-wrapped premium goods to minimise direct contact, appealing to consumers' safety, hygiene and handling concerns, the British Frozen Food Federation's (BFFF) *Frozen Food Report 2021* revealed.

Commenting on the purchasing factors impacting whether consumers opt for high-quality fine products over mass or not, Mistry confirms it comes down to: "Health and wellness, provenance and brand story."

Ever-evolving consumer needs

As we recover and look to the future, consumers are focusing their buying habits on health and wellness, supporting local communities and businesses, and contributing to the wider health of the planet. The fine food and drink brands that reflect these needs and present the range of high-quality ingredients, stories and finished products that consumers are actively seeking and searching for will prove valuable.

CONSUMERS WANT INFORMATION ON THEIR FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCT LIFE CYCLES

Detailing what consumers want to know in today's food and drinks industry, Coline Laurent, marketing and communication manager at Connecting Food, reveals the questions asked and knowledge sought relates to:

- **The ingredients:** what is inside each product?
- **Their provenance:** where do they come from, what is their journey?
- **Their processing:** is it highly processed?
- **Their environmental impact:** what is the carbon and water footprint of the product?

> "Increasing concerns around farmer income, child slavery, and deforestation also play a central role in how we think about food and make our purchasing decisions"







8 WAYS COVID CHANGED OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

The pandemic has forever altered the way consumers eat and buy food and drink. *Speciality Food* examines eight of the biggest changes for retailers to know

COMMENTATORS



OLIVER WRIGHT
ACCENTURE



KATHERINE PROWSE
LUMINA INTELLIGENCE



NICOLA KNIGHT
IGD

Fine food businesses across the industry were forced to adapt to a dramatically changed trading environment when Covid-19 arrived in the UK – but after many months of uncertainty, retailers, producers and wholesalers can now welcome a glimmer of stability. "As patterns of consumer behaviour start to settle and new habits become entrenched, clarity about the future shape of the industry is starting to emerge," explains Oliver Wright, global lead of Accenture's consumer goods and services industry group.

After working flat-out for a year and a half, the time has come to reflect on the ripples of change caused by the pandemic. "It's worth remembering that times of great disruption can also be times of great innovation, as businesses are forced to radically rethink the way they operate," Oliver continues. "That's where the food and beverage industry finds itself today. There are huge opportunities for companies that have enough organisational agility to ride the food innovation wave and respond quickly to changing consumer needs." With this in mind, we have explored a handful of ways that Covid has changed the way consumers eat and buy their food.

1 Sustainability

Concerns around the health of the environment have long been voiced in the fine food arena, but the pandemic amplified these issues to the forefront of consumers' minds. Research by Ecotone UK discovered that sustainability is the fastest-growing purchase consideration when consumers buy food and drink. The number of people buying products based on their sustainability credentials has risen by 25% in the last two years alone.

"The pandemic is likely to produce a more sustainable, healthier era of consumption over the next 10 years, making consumers think more about balancing what they buy and how they spend their time with global issues of sustainability," Oliver says. Accenture's research shows that shoppers are more conscious of sustainability today, with over half saying they are now more focused on the environment than they were before the pandemic.

"We have also seen consumers looking for food companies to help them make the right choices," Oliver continues. "More than two-thirds want brands to make it easier to consume more consciously." The retailers that make ethical consumption more straightforward for consumers – by stocking sustainably packaged products, creating packaging-free features or sourcing from local businesses, will see their esteem rise.

> "These new consumer behaviour and consumption trends are expected to outlast the pandemic, stretching far beyond 18 months and possibly for much of the current decade"

2 Health and wellbeing

One of the most well-documented changes to occur during the pandemic was the rise of healthy eating. But consumers aren't only concerned about their waistlines; they are considering how the food and drink they eat will impact both their mental and physical health. "Consumers are taking a more holistic view of the connection between their consumption and their mental and physical wellbeing, with the majority (70%) of people saying that they're looking to make a fundamental change in their approach to their health," Oliver says. Holistic health, which brings together physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing, is an all-encompassing approach which is increasingly gaining traction with consumers. This trend is especially prominent in younger age groups, as research by GlobalData found that around a third of consumers aged between 18-34 say mood-boosting and relaxation claims are key to their purchasing decisions in FMCG products. But with half of global consumers reporting feeling extremely or quite concerned about their mental wellbeing due to the pandemic, it's a trend that is beginning to reach across the generations.

Furthermore, research by IGD found consumers picked up healthier eating habits during the pandemic. In its latest *Appetite for Change* research, it discovered more than three-quarters (83%) of consumers changed how they planned, purchased and prepared their food in the first lockdown and over half (51%) claimed to have eaten more fruit and vegetables. Huge food brands, such as Unilever, are acting on the holistic health trend, but fine food retailers already have an upper hand thanks to their considered stocking choices.

3 E-commerce

Online sales soared during the pandemic – first out of necessity, and then out of habit as shoppers became comfortable ordering their food and drink online. Now, despite a small dip after the lockdown ended, this trend is still looking strong. In fact, research by VoucherCodes.co.uk and the Centre of Retail Research revealed that online sales are expected to make up almost a third of overall retail



COVID'S TOP LASTING LEGACIES

Katherine Prowse of Lumina Intelligence outlines how independents can cash in on new consumer habits



Many of the trends that saw rapid acceleration as a consequence of the pandemic are set to become lasting legacies. Home delivery, home working and shopping locally will offer key growth opportunities for independent retailers to capitalise on. Delivery allows retailers to target a wider consumer base, and it already accounts for one in 20 orders. Home working opens up the potential for retailers with stores in suburban areas to generate more food to go footfall. Whilst there will be a rebalancing now that hospitality has reopened, convenience retail will continue to grow and thrive.

> "Home delivery, home working and shopping local will offer key growth opportunities for independent retailers to capitalise on"



MORE THAN **TWO-THIRDS** WANT **BRANDS** TO MAKE IT **EASIER** TO **CONSUME** CONSCIOUSLY

spending this year, 11% more than was recorded in 2019.

"We have seen a huge acceleration in digital engagement, with online sales booming and set to remain above pre-pandemic levels for the foreseeable future," Oliver says. "For instance, according to Accenture research, among new or low-frequency e-commerce shoppers, purchases for food to cook at home grew by 333% over the course of the pandemic."

4 Food boxes

Accenture's research also noted that the evolution in consumer priorities caused by the rise of e-commerce can be seen in the growing popularity of innovative business models and consumer engagement strategies in the food and beverage sector, such as food boxes. "Accenture has been tracking these trends since 2016, and digital engagement is increasingly a key factor in consumer's purchasing decisions – especially in the last year," Oliver says. "For example, replenishment subscription models are now a key consideration for a quarter of consumers (double the proportion in 2016). This can be seen as part of the broader wellness drive, with regular deliveries helping control consumption and keep temptations at bay," he says.

More and more retailers and brands are looking to take a slice of the food and meal box market. "'Do it yourself' models, such as meal kits, are another rapidly growing trend, with over 60% of consumers now considering them at least occasionally. Nestlé, for instance, invested in Mindful Chef, which provides convenient chef-inspired meal kits with the added benefit of no-waste ingredients," Oliver adds. While the food box space is now big business for large brands, independents with local credentials and a good sense of provenance, have a strong – and unique – proposition for local customers to consider.

5 Local support

The call to shop local received significant support during the Covid-19 pandemic, with consumers keen to pour their hard-earned cash into their local economy – and going forward this offers independents a key growth opportunity, according to Katherine Prowse, senior insight manager at Lumina Intelligence. A recent report from Lumina indicated that one in five convenience shoppers cite 'I like to support my local store' as their main driver to independent shops. "Throughout the last year, 'Support Local' campaigns appeared across the country and were well received by shoppers who place such importance on this thriving trend; this is something Lumina Intelligence expects will continue going forward."

6 Scratch cooking

From the baking crazes during the early pandemic days to the demand for alternative cuisines fuelled by a desire to travel through the taste buds, the scratch cooking trend has kept retailers on their toes over the past year and a half. As shoppers cooked more meals at home – whether out of necessity or a newfound appreciation for good handmade fare – independent retailers felt the benefit. "The pandemic resulted in a huge shift towards home-cooking, as foodservice delivery became one of the only alternatives," Katherine tells *Speciality Food*.

But with the days of lockdown restrictions (hopefully) well behind us, retailers have to be a bit savvier to keep consumers in their kitchens going forwards. Katherine continues, "With shopper habits during the pandemic well established, retailers and operators now have to work hard to encourage consumers to change. Foodservice delivery continues to grow despite hospitality fully reopening. The shift towards home cooking is something that retailers will want to maintain. In-store theatre and meal inspiration will be key to motivating consumers and driving sales."

7 Indulgence

In spite of the booming health trend, consumers have also shown a keen desire to treat themselves with more traditional mood-boosting foods, such as luxurious mid-afternoon snacks or indulgent cheeseboard dinners. Little luxuries became staples during the pandemic, whether for self-treating or for gifting to loved ones who were missed. "Most people are still seeking a little comfort and indulgence in the food they buy, and all the more so after the difficult 18 months they've just been through," Oliver says.

Retailers can keep the spotlight on indulgent treats by stocking options for a range of price points, tastes and occasions. From a mouth-watering cheeseboard hamper with artisan biscuits and a bottle of fine wine to a simple box of vegan chocolates. Products that manage to tick the boxes of fantastic flavour, indulgence and healthy benefits will be surefire winners.

8 Convenience

The convenience factor has well and truly returned, according to IGD. While Covid first pushed us away from convenient grab-and-go meals, the easing of lockdown led to a return of food to go, ready meals and other simple food fixes. IGD's ShopperVista report, *Food to go: What's next for Shoppers*, revealed that this sector wasn't immune to Covid's changes to consumer habits, however. IGD's senior analyst for food to go Nicola Knight said that while the sector is making a comeback faster than expected, retailers will have to innovate to secure market share from foodservice operators.

"Whilst there have been some new product launches and major projects that were delayed due to the pandemic are now beginning to appear in stores, the challenge for retailers now is whether they can close the gap in market share," Nicola says. "It will depend on how far consumers return to pre-Covid habits and how fast retailers adapt to changes in behaviour that stick."

For retailers, all these changes will act as wake-up calls, Oliver says, "to ensure they have the agility and capability to be relevant to consumers and customers – with a portfolio of products and services that match shifting purchasing patterns – not just today, but post-pandemic as well."

AROUND **A THIRD** OF CONSUMERS AGED BETWEEN **18-34** SAY **MOOD-BOOSTING** AND **RELAXATION** CLAIMS ARE **KEY** TO THEIR **PURCHASING DECISIONS** IN FMCG PRODUCTS

3 WAYS THE PANDEMIC CHANGED FOOD TO GO

1 EVENING FOOD TO GO IS ON THE RISE

In the most recent lockdown, evening food to go missions reached their highest recorded level, becoming more common than lunch missions, IGD found. This could be a result of the growth of delivery services, which have made a wider range of products more accessible. It also raises the question of whether shoppers will continue to choose food to go in the evenings, as restrictions ease and the out of home sector reopens.

2 DEMAND FOR HOT OPTIONS GROWS

Hot food to go is becoming more popular. Demand for a range of food to go choices which are less portable could increase as levels of working from home are expected to be elevated compared to pre-pandemic times.

3 THE 'SUBURBAN SHIFT'

Food to go purchases continue to be driven by a typical 9-5 weekday working pattern, IGD found, despite more people working from home. This behaviour could continue to be supported by a 'suburban shift' as food to go businesses shift away from city centres into suburban areas to follow the consumer. A lower density footfall compared to city centres and transport hubs, combined with different peak times and shopper profiles, will mean new operating models will evolve to meet consumer needs.



FINAL CALL

Although spring is the season most associated with freshness and renewal, there is something to be said for a good autumn restart. Maybe it's a leftover instinct from my school days, but when the temperature finally drops (even after a disappointingly short summer) and a crisp chill returns to the air, I feel recharged and ready for a fresh start.

As staycation holidays wind down and the long days of summer begin shrinking, taking a moment of calm to reevaluate will certainly pay off in the long run. If you're anything like me, now is the perfect time to take a step back from the everyday hustle and bustle of running your business to consider your longer-term strategies and goals. Even though January may feel like yesterday, we've made it more than halfway through the year already. How are you getting on with all those grand plans you drew up after last Christmas?

If you're already moving swiftly forward with new plans and initiatives for your shop, that's great! But if things haven't gone quite as planned, there's still plenty of time to get your vision back on track. For instance, now might be the right time to review your product lines and consider what has worked over 2021 so far and what might need tweaking for next year. Covid has certainly kept us all on our toes, but it seems that ever-changing consumer habits may finally be calming down and returning to a state of normalcy (or a 'new normal', at least).

If that's not enough, you might even be considering refurbishment plans, a big deli counter rejig, a zero-waste initiative or even a new store opening.

And with Christmas well and truly on the way, you're most likely getting in the festive spirit, too, placing orders and dreaming up new in-store displays, decorations and deals. With experts predicting that consumers will be keen to go big this year after a disappointing lockdown in 2020, getting ahead with your seasonal to-do list will ensure that you're putting your best foot forward for a superb Christmas season.

We love hearing from our readers. Do you have a story to share or expertise to pass on? Please get in touch with us via courtney.goldsmith@aceville.co.uk

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5 MINUTES WITH

SERENA MARIANI, FOUNDER OF PASQUALE'S PEPPERS



WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
A lot of the 'plan B' jobs I can think of – restaurateur, event designer, food writer – involve food, actually, so I think it was meant to be!

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?
My first real job was as a waitress at Starbucks in London. They had a branch inside Madame Tussauds that was relatively quiet, so it was a plush job, but I spoke very little English so I found it quite challenging.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
As cheesy as it sounds, the memory of Nonno and generally my family back in Italy. The older generations have worked so hard so that we could have education, choices, the freedom to pursue our dreams in ways they couldn't.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?
I like to think I learnt something, about the world or about myself, from every job I've had.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE JOB?
The product creation process, working with amazing creatives like my designer Joe Walkling or photographer Uyen Luu, and definitely meeting customers and people who are curious and passionate about food!

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?
Admin. I am your typical creative but messy person, and I wish I was way more organised with it.

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY?
I love it when it's not an 'industry' but more like a community. It doesn't mean there's no competition, but I think most people in this field have a genuine passion for sharing.

TEA OR COFFEE?
Coffee. From a Neapolitan mocha, black, one sugar. Like a good Londoner though, I am also partial to speciality coffee – I love Allpress or Climpson's roasts.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?
Without a shade of doubt, spaghetti con le vongole, chilli and a glass of Trebbiano from cult Abruzzo producer Emidio Pepe. These things smell and taste like home.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?
"I always reach my goals. I just like to take the scenic route."

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
Bees. They were served to me in Malaysia when I was a guest and it didn't feel polite to turn them down.

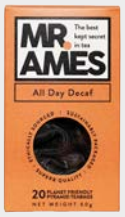
WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?
The last one I really enjoyed was Laura Lazzaroni's *La Cucina Italiana*.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?
Savoury, no doubts.



TRIED & TESTED

MR AMES TEA



A good breakfast tea is an essential product in any household, and it's one that retailers should certainly keep an eye on, especially as consumers look to trade up their basics for little luxuries. A new entrant to the scene is Mr Ames Tea. The range includes all the essentials, including aromatic Lemongrass & Ginger, bright and fragrant Earl Grey, icy Peppermint and nutty Green Sencha, but its rich, malty Golden Breakfast blend may be the star of the show. With a planet friendly mission, what's not to love?
mramestea.com

CAROBOO ORANGE CHOCO BAR



Creamy yet dairy-free and super sweet yet made without refined sugars, Caroboo Choco Bars are full of very tasty contradictions. Not only are they vegan and dairy and gluten-free, but they also use carob instead of chocolate. Carob is a brown pod grown in the Mediterranean that has a mild, sweet chocolatey taste and is filled with fibre, antioxidants and low amounts of fat and sugar. Creamed coconut also helps to create a soft and melting texture that vegan chocolate so often lacks. For indulgent flavours without the nasty ingredients, it's a winner.
eatcaroboo.co.uk

BUTTERNUT ROSE & PISTACHIO BUTTER



I am officially a nut butter lover, and when it comes to genuine innovation in the category I am all ears (and appetite). So when I came across ButterNut, a London-based purveyor of some of the most indulgent blends I've seen across yet, I was instantly a fan. As well as classics like Smooth and Crunchy Peanut Butters, the ButterNut range offers options such as Maple & Turmeric Cashew Butter; Rose & Pistachio Butter and Coconut & Cardamom Cashew Butter. A delicious product which ticks the trend, health and indulgence boxes in one jar? Count me in.
butter-nut.com

THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Kaori Simpson, executive chef director, Harajuku Kitchen



Harajuku Kitchen is situated in Bruntsfield on the south side of Edinburgh. It is a lovely neighbourhood full of independent businesses, from restaurants to cafés and artisan bakeries. We all support each other where and when we can. We also have a street food pop-up at the newly developed St James Quarter towards the east of the city, and we have street food stalls at two of Edinburgh's most popular markets, Stockbridge and Grassmarket.

We are very lucky to have so many brilliant suppliers on our doorstep for all aspects of the business. We have met many at the markets, which is where Harajuku Kitchen started in 2013. Being in the capital means we are spoilt for choice when it comes to sourcing ingredients. We also support independent suppliers in the surrounding areas, like the Borders and East Lothian.

Edinburgh's diversity is a source of inspiration. It is a multicultural city, so we have plenty of Asian, Polish and Halal outlets to source from all over the city. Rather than sourcing any of our ingredients and produce internationally, we tend to shop locally, using these outlets whenever possible. There are lots of weekly markets where independent traders can showcase their produce to the public and potential clients, like the farmer's market, Leith Market and Stockbridge.

There are plenty of fishmongers selling produce caught just off the east coast and top-class butchers supplying high-quality meat. Above all, it is the people behind the produce that make it so special. They are wholly dedicated to their trade and genuinely connected with the people and businesses within the city.

I am a member of Slow Food UK, so sourcing as locally as possible is really important to me. When it comes to fish for our sushi, I use Eddies Fishmonger in Edinburgh, which sources the best Scottish seafood and has done for years. The team is superb and nothing is ever too much trouble. The fish is always so fresh and they have never disappointed us. The Ethical Shellfish Company, run by Guy Grieves, is who we use for our shellfish. He fishes sustainably just off the west coast. For free-range pork, I use Shaws Meat, a family-run business in the Borders. They are one of the best pork suppliers in the country – the pork is tender, which is perfect for Japanese dishes. Cyrenians Farm is where we source our fruit and vegetables. We love working with them and the team behind it is brilliant. We often visit the farm as they also started growing Japanese herbs for us too, which are amazing. If we are putting on a beef special, we will go to Peelham Farm, as all their meat is organic. Denise, one of the owners, is one of the best in the business. She is so knowledgeable in her field and produces some of the best beef and mutton in the country. I love that I can incorporate Scotland's bountiful larder with my nation's cuisine.

> "It is the people behind the produce that make it special. They are wholly dedicated to their trade and genuinely connected with the people and businesses within the city"

IN ASSOCIATION WITH Garofalo

AN AUTUMNAL TWIST ON ITALIAN CUISINE

Showcase the cosiest and most comforting dishes and your customers will continue enjoying home cooked Italian meals



It's safe to say that many of us are suffering from a severe case of wanderlust thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic putting a (temporary) end to international travel. *Speciality Food* has previously reported on how the lack of travel has caused demand for alternative cuisines to rise, and Italian ingredients were certainly one of the beneficiaries.

From pizzas cooked outdoors in brand new pizza ovens to pastas whipped up with speciality sauces, the pandemic offered a chance for many Brits to remember what it is they love about Italian food. In fact, an analysis of more than 50,000 search queries by global tour company Trafalgar Travel found that during the pandemic, Brits searched for Italian food 33% more than the previous year with over three million searches for Italian recipes. Pizza was the number one favourite, up 14% from the previous year.

Autumn is the perfect time for independents to stir up this passion for Italian cuisine once again. Reshuffling your shelves can help bring richer sauces and tinned and jarred products back to the fore. As soon as the weather turns, your customers will be looking for cosier, autumnal flavours, like truffle shavings or decadent venison ragù. Sourcing locally foraged mushrooms and other seasonal veg grown in the UK will also help customers add a local British twist to their favourite Italian dishes.

For those particularly hands-on customers, why not sell pasta kits complete with everything one needs to craft their own comforting dinner from scratch, such as Italian 00 flour and semolina, a pasta maker and ravioli stamps. For the more time conscious, take a fresh look at your dried pastas and risottos as well as flavour-packed, stir-in sauces to ensure your shop offers something different to the multiples. Autumn is a great time to fall in love with Italian cuisine. As customers became even more familiar with their favourite Italian dishes during the pandemic, giving them the gentlest prod towards exciting fine food products can make all the difference this season.

Are you passionate about Italian food and drink? Get in touch via courtney.goldsmith@aceville.co.uk.



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