THE COUNTRY RANGE GROUP
MAGAZINE FOR CATERERS

Stirtop

WINTER

NOV/
DEC
2026



GROWING YOUR OWN TALENT | FESTIVE RETRO REVIVAL
SEASONAL SEAFOOD | LEADING LIGHT JACOB KENEDY

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BRING DEPTH TO EVERY FESTIVE DISH *WITH* BISTO PROFESSIONAL BOUILLON



ROOT VEGETABLE BROTH *WITH* GREMOLATA OIL*

Serves 10 - 10 mins prep - 20 mins cook

INGREDIENTS

400g carrots, diced
400g parsnips, diced
300g swede, diced
200g leeks, sliced
2l boiling water
50g Bisto Boullion Vegetable Paste
50ml olive oil
Black pepper

For gremolata oil:
50ml olive oil
Zest of 1 lemon
10g fresh parsley, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, grated

METHOD

Step 1 In a large pan, add carrots, parsnips, swede, and cover with the water, Bring to the boil. Add the Bisto Vegetable Bouillon Paste bring to a simmer for 5 minutes then add the leeks and simmer for a further 10 minutes, season with ground pepper.

Step 2 To make the gremolata oil. Mix the olive oil, lemon zest, parsley, and garlic. Allow to infuse before serving.

Step 3 To serve, ladle broth with the vegetables into bowls and drizzle with gremolata oil to finish.

Chef's Tip
This is great serve with warm rolls.

WHY CATERERS CHOOSE BISTO PROFESSIONAL

- CONSISTENT FLAVOUR EVERY TIME
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Have yourself a MERRY LITTLE WIN-MAS!

The countdown to Christmas is on, and we're delighted to be bringing back the Stir it up Advent Calendar for another year of festive fun, surprises and giveaways. Following the fantastic response from readers last year, we couldn't wait to do it all again.

As a small thank you for your continued support throughout the year, we've once again filled December with exciting daily prizes and festive treats to help make the busiest time of year a little more enjoyable.

Here's how it works: the front cover of your magazine is your advent calendar. Each day throughout December, simply open the numbered window, scan the QR code and you'll be taken to the Stir it up website to enter that day's giveaway. Entries are typically open for one day, unless otherwise stated, so make sure you check back each day for another chance to win.

We've teamed up with a range of fantastic industry partners to help bring this year's calendar to life, and we'll also be sharing festive inspiration, seasonal recipes and a few surprises of our own along the way.

And what's behind the doors? Well, where would the fun be in giving everything away! While the prizes will remain a surprise until each day arrives, you can look forward to a fantastic selection of giveaways, including some favourites inspired by last year's calendar alongside plenty of exciting new additions.

We know December is one of the busiest months in the foodservice calendar, so we hope this daily dose of festive cheer adds a little extra excitement to your countdown to Christmas.

So grab your magazine, scan today's QR code and see what's waiting behind the door.

From everyone at Stir it up, thank you for being part of our community. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and the best of luck with this year's Advent Calendar!



Thank you

A huge thank you to all of our supplier partners who have supported this year's Advent Calendar. Your generosity and enthusiasm help make this festive feature possible, and we're incredibly grateful for your contribution in helping us spread a little Christmas cheer to readers this December.

Ingredient



With the end of 2026 fast approaching, this issue is packed with inspiration to help make Christmas memorable.

We explore how hospitality is growing its own talent, put seasonal seafood in the spotlight and revisit much-loved classics with a retro revival. There's plenty of Christmas recipe inspiration too, from creative ways to use goose to making the most of seasonal leftovers. And, to add a little extra festive cheer, our Advent Calendar returns, with a surprise for each day.

We hope this issue brings plenty of fresh ideas, festive flavour and inspiration to see you through the busiest season of the year.

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ALLERGEN REFERENCES

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Fresh FROM THE KITCHEN

Winter is well and truly setting in, so we're looking at the latest menu trends to inspire your menu for the cold months beyond the festive season. Comforting familiar favourites are being given a boost, with global flavours, premium touches and new formats, giving you plenty of ways to refresh favourite dishes without reinventing the wheel.

BREAKFAST GETS BIGGER – Breakfast is breaking out of the morning. Think loaded potato dishes, handheld breakfast baps and bagels, savoury pastries and familiar favourites given a brekkie makeover. With consumers increasingly eating little and often, breakfast-inspired dishes offer opportunities right across the day.

VEG TAKES CENTRE STAGE – Carrots, squash, cabbage and potatoes are being promoted from supporting acts to menu heroes. Affordable, versatile winter veg can be charred, roasted, preserved or paired with bold sauces and seasonings to deliver maximum flavour while keeping an eye on costs.

COMFORT GETS A GLOW-UP – Pies, toasties, soups, crispy potatoes and rotisserie meats are back in force, but with an upgrade. Premium cheeses, truffle, caviar and globally inspired sauces can turn simple favourites into affordable indulgences. Smaller plates are another opportunity, delivering big flavour in wallet-friendly portions.

SWEET NOSTALGIA – Desserts lean heavily into comfort, from cinnamon buns and chocolate mousse to custard, meringue and banana puddings. All of the nostalgic flavour combinations are here to stay, but with new twists and mashups.

TURN UP THE FLAVOUR – Winter doesn't have to mean predictable. Try popular swavoury or swicy combinations, alongside matcha, black sesame, pistachio and pecan.



Twisted traditional Swedish cinnamon rolls

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From thefoodpeople Winter Menu Report 2026

Cooks CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

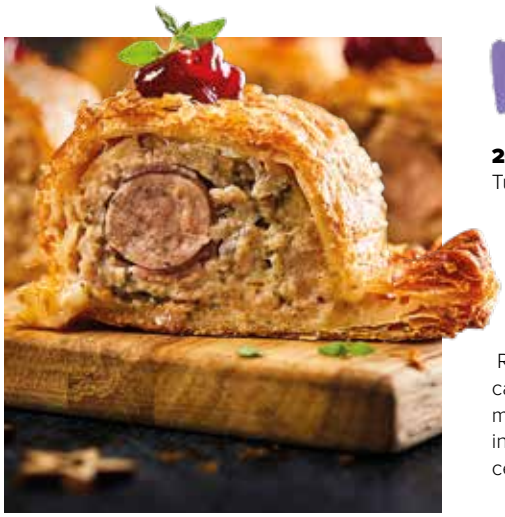
1ST – 30TH NOVEMBER – WORLD VEGAN MONTH
Celebrate World Vegan Month with a vibrant barley and greens bowl recipe from Unilever, combining silky tofu, roasted shiitake mushrooms, cucumber and goji berries. Finished with earthy matcha and bright, citrusy flavours, this colourful, nourishing dish brings fresh inspiration to plant-based menus.

Why not also bring some plant-powered fun to younger diners this World Vegan Day with tasty GARDEN GOURMET® Nuggets. Crispy, golden and packed with flavour, they're perfect for dipping, dunking and adding a playful twist to kids' menus.









DECEMBER

26TH DECEMBER – BOXING DAY
Turn Christmas leftovers into a Boxing Day crowd-pleaser with this loaded pizza recipe. Topped with pigs in blankets, leftover cheeses, sprouts, gherkins and pickled walnuts, it's a deliciously creative way to give festive favourites a second life while minimising food waste.

31ST DECEMBER – NEW YEAR'S EVE
Raise a toast to the New Year with this festive sausage roll canapé recipe from Country Range. Packed with sausage meat, turkey, sage and onion stuffing, cranberry and pigs in blankets, they're a delicious bite-sized addition to any celebration menu.

JANUARY

1ST – 31ST JANUARY – NATIONAL SLOW COOKING MONTH
Embrace the art of slow cooking with a rich and aromatic lamb shoulder masala recipe from Country Range. Tender lamb is gently cooked in a fragrant tikka masala sauce, creating melt-in-the-mouth texture and deep flavour. A comforting curry that's well worth the wait.

16TH JANUARY – HOT & SPICY FOOD DAY
Celebrate Hot & Spicy Food Day with a fiery Calabrian Pasta recipe from Opies that's packed with bold Mediterranean flavour. Rigatoni is tossed through a rich tomato and chilli sauce, with capers adding a punchy, savoury twist. A simple, spicy crowd-pleaser for any menu.

With thanks to Unilever, GARDEN GOURMET®, Opies and Country Range.

The full recipes can be found at **www.stiritupmagazine.co.uk**





IN SEASON Brussels Sprouts Celery Clementine Whiting



Readers' lives



NAME: Albert Doga

BORN AND RAISED: Born in Albania, raised in Greece.

JOB TITLE: Head Chef

PLACE OF WORK: Altitude 28 in Swansea

WHEN DID YOU JOIN? I joined the company in 2022 as head chef of the sister restaurant before moving to Altitude 28 last year.

PASSIONS OUTSIDE OF THE KITCHEN? I love football and I used to play a lot, but I can't really risk getting injured and missing work now.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CUISINE TO EAT? I can eat Greek food every day, but I have recently been enjoying experimenting with Asian ingredients and flavours.

WHAT IS THE MOST ENJOYABLE PART OF YOUR JOB? Making people happy through food. I love creating and testing new dishes and then watching the reaction of customers.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE COUNTRY RANGE PRODUCT AND WHY? The Country Range Steak Cut Chips are excellent and so are the cooking wines.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO SWITCH OFF/RECHARGE? I like to keep fit so spend time at the gym.

WHAT'S YOUR DREAM JOB? I'd like to have my own restaurant one day, but I am passionate about pastry and desserts, so I also always dream of having a cake or dessert shop.

WHAT TRENDS DO YOU SEE TAKING OVER IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS? I think we're going to see more twists on classic dishes. It's something I enjoy doing – taking a classic dish and putting my own spin on it.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE DISH TO EAT? I love sweets and desserts so I would have to go for a Cretan Orange Cake. It's stunning but the recipe is a secret.



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Pineapple

HOW VERY REFRESHING



CARDS ON THE TABLE

Country Range is launching a new series of activity cards to help care home caterers and activity co-ordinators plan their menus and calendars. They provide ideas not only for meals, but also for activities, along with hints and tips on how to modify dishes for people with dysphagia or dementia and ensure they are nutrient dense in line with the guidance in the BDA Care Home Digest.

Rachel Porter, Own Brand Manager, Country Range Group, says, "We know that planning menus around special events and key dates can be challenging, particularly when you're looking for ideas beyond the usual daily menu. These cards save time by giving inspiration and practical ideas for menus, rather than having to start from scratch. It's not just about the food; the cards give teams ideas for activities that can be incorporated throughout the day. They enable care homes to plan ahead and create special experiences for their residents."

"They provide more detailed information and practical guidance on food modification." - Andy Cullum

The cards, which are free to download, include useful templates that can be printed off and used in craft activities. Andy Cullum is a chef and trainer, known as the IDDSI guy and has worked with Country Range on creating the activity cards. He says, "We're hoping this series of cards will make planning easier and encourage greater collaboration between the kitchen and activity teams. The cards provide that initial spark of inspiration. Ultimately, we want to help create meaningful and memorable days not only for residents, but staff as well."

Andy says, "Valentine's Day can bring back different emotions and memories for residents. We decided to focus on the activity rather than make it about the celebration. Shortbread hearts can form part of an activity – residents can get together to bake and decorate. As the cards continue to develop, we hope caterers will see them as fun and inspiring to use, but also as a way of learning and building their confidence around modifying food. The idea is to give teams the inspiration first and then the tools and knowledge to make those ideas work."

Visit **https://countryrange.co.uk/** or **www.theiddsiguy.com** for more information.

KEY EVENTS ARE COVERED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR INCLUDING:



DIWALI - 8TH NOVEMBER

Recipes include Cheese and Spinach Pakoras, Cardamom Shortbread Fingers and Mango and Yoghurt Shrikhand Style Dessert. Activities to choose from include lantern making, a spice-smelling sensory session and decorating LED tealights.



HANUKKAH - 4TH DECEMBER

Recipes include apple and cinnamon squares and mini potato latkes. Suggestions for activities include colouring or painting dreidel pictures and colouring or painting paper menorahs.



CHRISTMAS - 25TH DECEMBER

Recipes include Prawn Cocktail, Roast Turkey Dinner and Trifle, while activity suggestions include decorating gingerbread biscuits, holding a Christmas jumper fashion show, creating a memory tree with festive stories and organising a Christmas pudding stirring ceremony.



VALENTINE'S DAY - 14TH FEBRUARY

Recipes include shortbread hearts and friendship afternoon teas with flower arranging and a famous couples quiz as activity ideas.

"In our previous booklets, we have already covered methods for modifying different types of food. We would encourage caterers to use these resources alongside the activity cards, as they provide more detailed information and practical guidance on food modification." - Andy Cullum



PLANT POWER IN SCHOOLS

Research carried out by Linda McCartney Foods found that 73% of parents were likely to encourage their children to eat vegetarian meals at school as long as high-quality standards were maintained. In addition, over 28% would like their child to eat a meat-free meal at least twice a week.

So how can school caterers ramp up vegetarian and meat-free meals so they are not only nutritious but also attractive to students?

Veganuary, the annual global campaign which encourages people to try a vegan diet, takes place every January and presents the perfect opportunity for schools to get children engaged. "Be creative – plant foods are naturally colourful and vibrant so put these front and centre to make dishes more appealing," advises Hannah Weller from Veganuary. "Train kitchen staff on a small number of new recipes rather than a whole new menu. Choosing familiar dishes first such as a curry, pasta bake or bolognese and swapping the protein source is often easier to introduce and more likely to be well received. For example, swap mince in bolognese for lentils or diced mushrooms or swap chicken in curries for chickpeas."

The names of plant-based dishes need to be appealing to students, so Hannah suggests emphasising different flavours and textures in the dish names. "Use words that evoke the senses such as crispy, spicy, juicy, creamy and smoky or use fun and playful names. Incorporate them into the main menu instead of having them on a separate one. Position them among the animal-based options so students don't think they are separate or inferior to the meat dishes."

"Use words that evoke the senses such as crispy, spicy, juicy, creamy and smoky or use fun and playful names."

Students can be tempted to try plant-based meals with taster pots, or by holding a tasting event. Sophia Millar from ProVeg UK, whose School Plates Programme trains caterers throughout the sector via workshops, says, "Invite children, parents and teachers to try new dishes together. Research shows children need repeated opportunities to try new foods before they accept them."

The Vegetarian Society's cookery school COOK also works with schools and councils teaching catering staff how to make plant-based food. Sam Linford-Platt, head of the cookery school, recommends taking inspiration from across the cultural spectrum. "Vegetarian and plant-based dishes can be some of the most inclusive options on the menu, often appealing across different cultural and religious groups and, depending on the recipe, helping to accommodate a range of dietary requirements too. The recipe for success is simple; serve food that tastes great, looks appealing and works for as many pupils as possible."

Create tasting experiences that make trying new foods fun and familiar



CAMPAIGN SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Doubling down on efforts to encourage more vegetarian meals in schools, Veg Power has introduced 'Bang in Some Beans' - a programme designed for children in primary and secondary education. Research shows that 86% of primary-aged children are not meeting their fibre target and beans are an excellent source. The campaign, which encourages schools and caterers to increase bean and fibre intake, is supported by celebrities such as Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Chantelle Nicholson and Tom Aikens. This is part of a bigger campaign to increase the UK's bean and pulse consumption, run in partnership with The Food Foundation and Beans is How, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Dan Parker, chief executive, says, "We want children and their families to incorporate beans and pulses within their diets on a regular basis so they can benefit from all they have to offer. They are high in fibre, low in fat and a good source of protein. It's important to highlight that they are an affordable source of protein and fibre. For this year's campaign we wanted to change perceptions of beans and encourage them to be thought of as a good thing! Next year's campaign is in the planning stages and will incorporate feedback from caterers and schools."

BENEFITS FOR ALL

Plant-based food offers health benefits, but schools can benefit by saving money too. As Sophia points out, "Plant-based whole food ingredients are often more affordable than meat and dairy. Chickpeas are cheaper than chicken and lentils cost a fraction of the price of minced beef. One of the schools we worked with saved 20% on food costs by increasing their plant protein on the menu. For example, ingredients for plant-based spaghetti bolognese with lentils and soya mince cost 41p per portion compared to the traditional dish made with mince, costing an average 72p per portion."

Reimagine familiar favourites



ENCOURAGE THE UPTAKE OF MORE VEGETARIAN MEALS WITH THESE TIPS:

- Be creative – put plant foods at the front to make dishes more appealing
- Train kitchen staff on a few new recipes rather than a whole menu
- Make the names of dishes more appealing
- Incorporate plant-based dishes in the main menu
- Give out taster pots or hold a tasting menu event



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GROWING YOUR OWN TALENT

Training is essential to keep staff updated with new skills, to make them feel valued and help them improve performance, but with businesses under tremendous pressure financially, training may not be high on the agenda.

As Simon Rogan MBE, award-winning chef and restaurateur, says, “There are certainly financial pressures facing hospitality at the moment, which can make investing in training more challenging, but it’s incredibly important that we continue to prioritise it. Giving people the time, skills and confidence to develop strengthens the whole business and helps secure the future of the industry.”

Simon is one of several chefs who has started up their own training centre, and runs Academy by Simon Rogan in Cartmel, Cumbria. Others include Gordon Ramsay, Rick Stein and Jean-Christophe Novelli. “We’ve seen huge benefits from having our own apprenticeship scheme, but that doesn’t mean every chef or restaurant needs to create their own academy,” says Simon. “It’s a significant commitment and there are already some excellent programmes doing brilliant work. Chefs and businesses can contribute in different ways. It might start with taking on one or two young chefs, providing strong mentorship and putting a clear structure around their progression. Ultimately, raising standards comes down to sharing knowledge and giving the next generation the support they need to succeed.”

Roberto Costa, founder of Macellaio RC chain of Italian restaurants in London, set up Matoori Academy, offering a six-month course on all aspects of hospitality such as customer service, back-office operations and leadership. He says, “When you train people within your own culture, they understand not only what to do but why they are doing it, that’s key. An academy creates loyalty because when people feel a company is investing in their development they are more interested in investing their energy. Training needs to be connected to real operations. Hospitality can’t be learned only from a screen or inside a classroom. People need supervised experience in a restaurant where they will deal with real customers and real pressure.”

“When people feel a company is investing in their development they are more interested in investing their energy.”

- Roberto Costa, Founder of Macellaio RC

For companies considering setting up an academy, you need to look at parts of the business where skills are in short supply, what roles are difficult to fill and the points at which people tend to leave. Adele Oxberry, CEO and founder of Umbrella Training, says, “Envisage what the business will need from its workforce over the next three to five years. A successful academy should address genuine workforce needs and give people a clearer, more supported role from the outset.”

Give people the confidence to learn by doing through supervised real life experience





HOW TRAINING IS DIVERSIFYING

Training for chefs has transformed over the years to a much broader spectrum of skills. Leiths School of Food and Wine has updated its diploma to include training in social media and content creation. This is taught by Craig Morrison, a former Student of the Year. The course in food content creation covers everything from styling and videography to audience building.



Louise Kissane, Culinary School Director, says, “The diploma has always moved in step with the industry. We teach students to cook properly first and the camera comes after. You learn the craft, then you learn how to communicate it. A chef who can cook brilliantly and also tell the story of that food has a genuine advantage. If we sent students out without those skills, we’d be preparing them for the industry as it was, not the industry as it is. Our job is to ready them for the careers actually in front of them.”



CELEBRATING COLLABORATION

The Clink Charity, which offers training kitchens and restaurants inside prisons, has partnered with Benugo to create a structured employment pathway for prison leavers. Benugo has invested in the restaurant at HMP Brixton for the next five years, and the relationship is a blend of financial support, in-prison training and masterclasses with their learning and development team, interview preparation and fast-track to employment pathways post-release. Donna-Marie Edmonds, Chief Executive, The Clink Charity, says, “Our training model is built on a simple principle – real skills in real environments leading to real opportunities.” Training takes place in restaurants, kitchens, gardens and events, enabling learners to apply their skills in practice and develop professional standards.

Another successful partnership has been between the National Association of Care Catering (NACC) and Umbrella Training to create new courses for chefs working in the care sector. Adele Oxberry from Umbrella Training says, “This shows what can be achieved by bringing together deep sector knowledge and training expertise. Working in care catering can be very different from hospitality so the programme reflects this.”

Vadasz

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For companies seeking a similar collaboration, Adele suggests identifying the gaps in the workforce and the roles that are difficult to recruit or retain. “These conversations should involve the people doing the jobs as they understand the challenges better than anyone. From there, the right training partner can help create the right training programme.”

Ultimately, attracting young people to the industry is vital to develop the workforce of the future. Ross Burgess, head chef, Gordonstoun School in Moray is keen to encourage the next generation of chefs and hospitality professionals. It is the only school in Scotland to offer Leiths Education cookery courses which are delivered by Ross and the catering manager. Ross says, “Over the past two years we’ve been amazed by the enthusiasm shown by our students. Hospitality education opportunities locally have declined in recent years and there are fewer pathways available for young people interested in the industry. I believe this initiative could make a genuine difference in the years ahead.”

Although the hospitality industry is under pressure, the initiatives taken by so many throughout the sector are proving it is more important than ever to develop and nurture staff, providing them with the necessary skills to strengthen a business.

“Real skills in real environments lead to real opportunities”

- Donna-Marie Edmonds, Chief Executive, The Clink Charity

TIPS FOR BUILDING A TRAINING PROGRAMME:

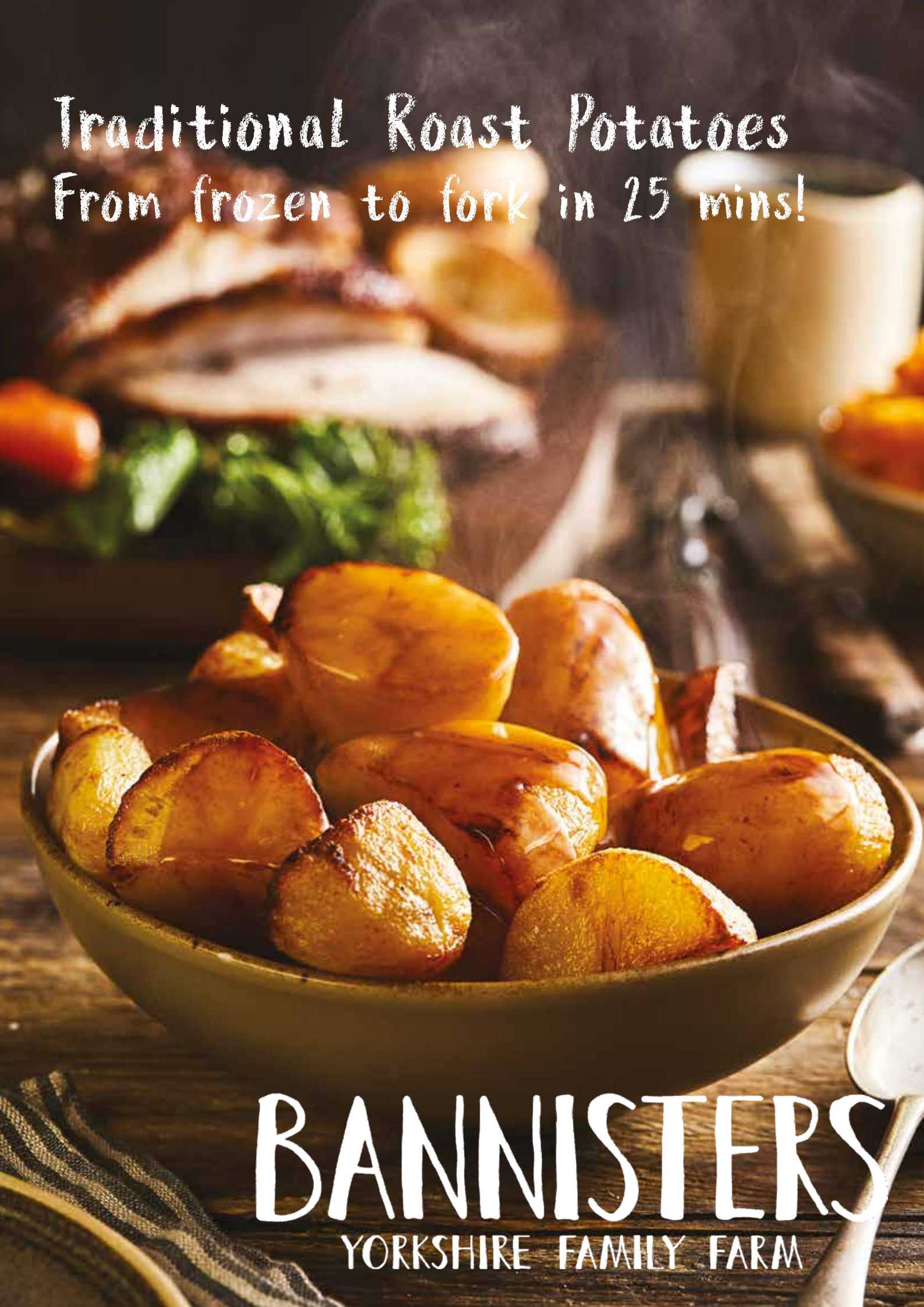
- Map the gaps, looking at which roles are hardest to fill and the points at which people tend to leave
- Plan for the workforce you’ll need in three to five years
- Involve the people actually doing the jobs when designing a programme
- Keep learning tied to real service
- Partner before you build, as charities, colleges and specialist providers can often deliver what an in-house academy would
- Widen the skill set beyond knife work to cover communication, leadership and even content creation



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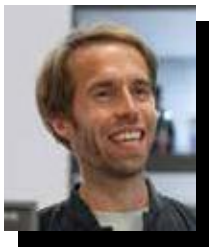
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BEER PAIRINGS



Mark Dredge is a James Beard award-winning beer writer, author and TV presenter who serves as the resident beer expert on Channel 4's Sunday Brunch. A certified cicerone (the beer equivalent of a sommelier), he is currently an adviser to the EU's More Than Only Food & Drink campaign and has written nine books focused on beer history, flavour profiles, and food pairings.



HOW CAN SOMEONE GET STARTED WITH BEER PAIRINGS?

It can be as easy as pairing beer with snacks on the menu - it doesn't need to be with full meals. A beer and snack menu can be a great way to encourage people to try different things.

ARE THERE SIMPLE PRINCIPLES TO APPLY?

Intensity matching is one of the best approaches. You wouldn't put a classic but light German Pils with a rich chocolate cake because the dessert will overpower the beer.

I use an approach that looks to bridge flavours. It means you're looking for something similar in the beer and food to help them come together. Using roasty Irish stout with a charred steak or a creamy German Hefeweizen with a Thai curry.

ARE THERE ANY CLASSIC PAIRINGS THAT SURPRISE PEOPLE?

One that always works is a Belgian cherry beer with a dark chocolate dessert like a brownie or mousse. The sweet-sourness in the beer is a brilliant flavour with the chocolate.

"You're looking for something similar in the beer and food to help them come together."

There's a unique style from upper Bavaria called Rauchbier, which is a smoked lager. It's an unusual flavour to begin with but it's wonderful with smoked meats or a big traditional American barbecue.

Avoid very hoppy beer with spicy food as the flavours can clash and actually make the chilli heat more intense, which can be unpleasant.

DO OPERATORS NEED TO INVEST IN SERVEWARE?

One common issue I hear people say is that beer fills them up, so they don't want to have beer with dinner. But you don't need to have pints with a meal, and smaller servings – much like wine – make more sense. Have nice half-pint glasses and nice stemmed wine glasses.

Serve everything fridge cold or at regular draught temperature. No special technique is needed, but make sure a beer has foam – foam makes a beer look better, and that's the big part of the perception of quality.

CAN LOW AND NO-ALCOHOL BEERS BE PART OF A PAIRING OFFER TOO?

Yes, absolutely. It's another way to make beer feel like an elevated dining experience. Often alcohol-free can be perceived as beer without something, but there are so many great non-alcoholic beers available and they deserve to be celebrated.

MARK'S TOP PAIRING TIPS:

- **Red meat has a richer flavour and works well with malty beers like Belgian amber ales, German dark lagers, Czech lagers and Irish stouts.**
- **Belgian Dubbel and Quadrupel are really good with things like a roast dinner, a beef Wellington, a hearty stew or a ragú or beef lasagne.**
- **Fish and seafood typically want lighter beers like Belgian Witbiers, Saison, Blonde ales, or a classic Pilsner.**
- **Tangy tomato-based dishes like a malt flavour so an Amber or Dark Lager, or Belgian Dark Ale is good with tomato dishes.**
- **Hops and IPAs are best with stronger and richer dishes, often with fried foods.**



ELEVATE YOUR FESTIVE MEALTIMES

Combine trusted Christmas favourites with contemporary menu ideas to create festive experiences that diners will remember.



Christmas is a valuable opportunity for operators to drive sales with standout festive menus that balance the familiar with the new.

Premier Foods' latest research shows that 63% of festive diners eat out to spend time with friends and family, while 38% want to soak up the seasonal atmosphere and 36% are drawn by special festive menus. Customers are also willing to make the occasion count: 44% of those eating out in December are prepared to spend more on a meal than at other times of the year.

The right combination of familiar flavours, creative dishes and thoughtful finishing touches can help operators convert this demand into meaningful sales opportunities.

44%

of diners are prepared to spend more on a meal during the festive season than at any other time of year.

START WITH THE FLAVOURS THEY KNOW AND LOVE

Trusted festive flavours are essential. Turkey with gravy is the festive food most associated with a Christmas dinner according to 62% of December diners, followed by pigs in blankets (43%), Christmas pudding (35%) and roast potatoes (34%).

However, familiar does not have to mean predictable. While 45% of festive diners prefer traditional flavours, 35% want to see a combination of both traditional flavours and modern twists. Using recognisable Christmas ingredients in different formats can help operators appeal across generations and extend festive flavours into casual dining, food-to-go and smaller-plate occasions.

A CHRISTMAS CLASSIC, WRAPPED UP

The **Paxo Christmas Dinner Wrap with Bisto Gravy Dip** combines roast turkey, Paxo Sage & Onion Stuffing, pigs in blankets, cranberry sauce and seasonal vegetables in a warm tortilla.

Served with a rich Bisto gravy – the nation's favourite – and cranberry dip, it delivers all the flavours of a Christmas roast in a convenient format. Operators can also adapt the filling to make use of different meats and seasonal vegetables across their menus.

Find full recipe on **premierfoodservice.co.uk**



STOCK UP ON YOUR CHRISTMAS FAVOURITES NOW

Consumer research source: OnePoll survey of 2,000 UK adults who dine out in December, conducted 3–8 October 2025.
Product claim source: Circana (UK) Ltd, Foodservice, UK, Gravy Granules (Category Defined by Premier Foods), Value Sales, 12 WE 12 May 2026.

TRUSTED FAVOURITES, QUALITY RESULTS

Ingredients that work across multiple dishes can help busy kitchens maintain consistency while simplifying preparation and service.

Bisto can be used to add depth to gravies, sauces, soups, broths and pie fillings, while **P**axo Sage & Onion Stuffing works in everything from a traditional roast to festive wraps, Scotch eggs and seasonal pies. Bird's Custard Powder can accompany a classic Christmas pudding or provide a versatile base for custard creams and flavoured dessert sauces.

Trusted names also hold appeal for customers. More than three-fifths of festive diners (61%) like to see menus with popular branded ingredients such as gravy, custard or stuffing.

61%

like to see menus highlighting popular branded ingredients such as gravy, custard or stuffing.





ADD A LIGHTER SEASONAL OPTION



The **Bisto Root Vegetable Broth with Gremolata Oil** brings together carrots, parsnips, swede and leeks in a warming broth made with Bisto Vegetable Bouillon Paste.

Finished with a vibrant lemon, garlic and parsley oil, it offers a colourful meat-free option for festive diners. Serve it with warm rolls as a starter or lighter seasonal dish.

Find full recipe on **premierfoodservice.co.uk**

MAKE THE FINISHING TOUCHES COUNT

Quality is a major consideration when choosing where to celebrate, with 88% of festive diners saying it would influence their choice of venue.

Small additions can elevate the experience further, whether that is a rich gravy served on the side, an extra stuffing accompaniment or a warming cinnamon custard paired with dessert.

By combining trusted Christmas favourites from Bisto, Paxo and Bird's with creative formats and thoughtful details, operators can deliver the familiar flavours customers love while giving their festive menus something extra.



"Tradition should remain at the heart of the festive menu, but there is also an appetite for a modern twist. Using popular Christmas flavours in contemporary dishes can help operators drive sales across different dayparts and occasions."

Louise Wagstaffe
Senior Culinary Advisor at Premier Foods

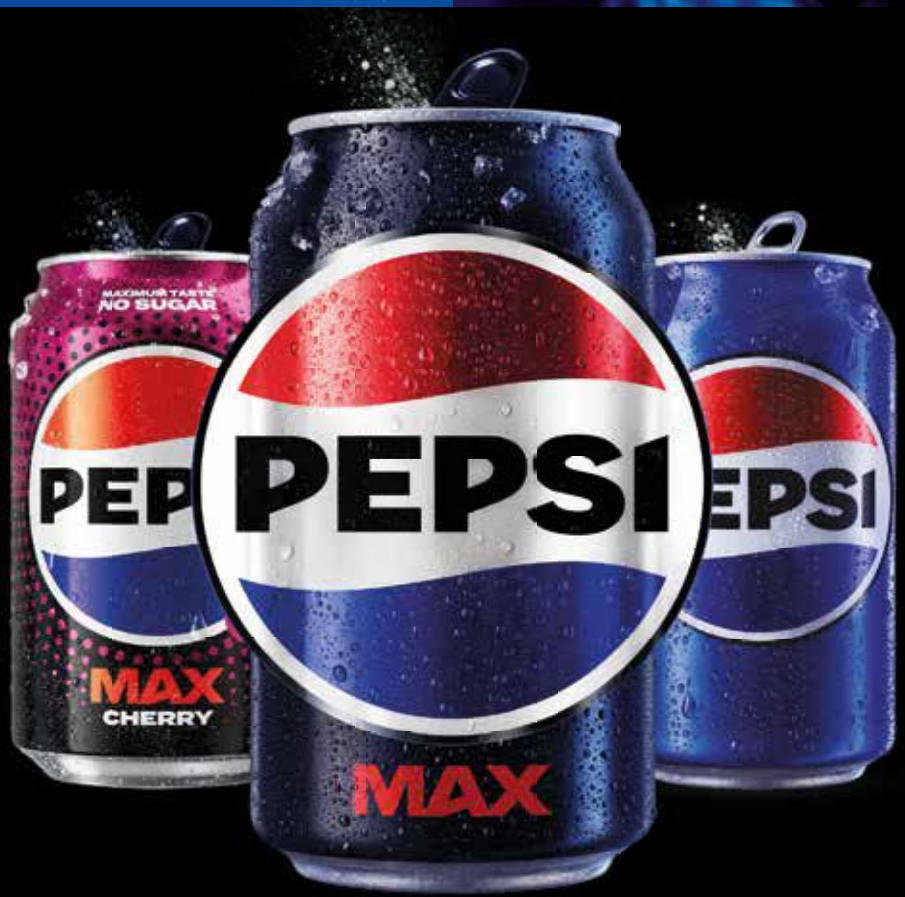
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recycle

Retro Revival

Prawn Cocktail, Duck à L'Orange, Arctic Roll, Black Forest Gateau. Dishes that spent two decades being quietly mocked are suddenly the most requested things on the menu. Waitrose research published this year found Prawn Cocktail topped the list of dishes diners most want back, with sales of its own version up 170% year on year.

The appeal makes sense. When everything else feels uncertain, people order what they recognise. The trick is making a 40-year-old dish feel like a decision rather than a shortcut. We asked our expert panel of chefs how they're bringing the classics back without the cringe.

Brasserie Trifle

Image credit: Frasershot Ltd



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Solina



JIMMY GARCIA
Founder, Jimmy Garcia Catering

Refined comfort food is becoming a major trend, with more clients requesting dishes that blend indulgence with creativity. Nostalgic favourites like our Ex-Dairy Big Mac Steak Tartare are examples where retro food is being reinvented with a touch of sophistication. Even classics like the traditional ice cream sundae are getting a modern makeover, offering a mix of familiarity and excitement.

Provenance is key. Today's diners want to know the story behind their food. High-quality ingredients that are grown, reared, or produced transparently allow caterers to create a narrative that connects guests to what they're eating. This closer connection not only enhances the experience but also meets the growing demand for authenticity and sustainability.

Advances in food and agricultural technology are transforming menus in unexpected ways too. Our Very Modern Caesar Salad features baby gem lettuce grown in-house using an EvoGro system. This innovation allows us to provide hyper-local, ultra-fresh ingredients with a touch of theatrical flair.



CHARLIE CROTE
Head Chef, Constance

My nan, Shirley, used to make a Trifle every week. And we have fun reinventing new flavours daily in the restaurant. We do this by using the nostalgic flavours but updating how they are presented to be more reflective of the modern day. Although there is always room for a full throwback to this era... we love a doily and a vol-au-vent at Constance.

We play on the classics and put an individual take on things. For instance, our Clay Pot Chicken is a nod back to how chicken used to be cooked – in a pot. But we worked with a talented ceramicist to design our own unique pot that feels rustic and charming, yet much more modern than what you would have found in a kitchen 40–50 years ago.

Brasserie Dorset Crab Vol-au-Vent

Image credit: Frasershot Ltd

Refreshing Mexican Shrimp Cocktail with lime





MARILENA UNGUREANU
Head Chef, Sopwell House

I keep coming back to Prawn Cocktail and Beans Cassoulet. They are so nostalgic, but with a great taste. One is light and fresh (Prawn Cocktail), one is deep comfort (Beans Cassoulet), both remind me of the 80s/90s without feeling dated.

I keep retro recipes updated by following new trends to keep the essence/soul of the dish but refresh it. Better sourcing, better quality, lighter touches, and techniques that fit how we eat now. The memory stays, but the execution updates to our times.

Our philosophy is 'simple is better', I love plating with ingredients that I can count on one hand, being able to recognise the ingredients and say: I can see it. No fuss, just clarity. That honesty is what makes retro food feel modern again.



SARAH POOLE
Pacific West

Smoked salmon never really left the menu, it just needed a nostalgic nudge to feel current again. The 1980s dinner party classic, Smoked Salmon and Prawn Cocktail, is being reworked for today's diners: flaked salmon and prawns folded through a light, citrus-sharp Marie Rose foam, spooned into a crisp tuile cup rather than the traditional glass sundae dish. The retro charm stays intact, but the presentation is pared right back, finished with fresh dill and a squeeze of lime for brightness.

For chefs, salmon remains the easiest way to bring that decadent, dinner-party feel back to the table, proof that a well-loved classic doesn't need to be reinvented, just a confident, modern update.



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Solina

Vegetable lasagne





ALEX CONNELL
Roving Chef, Vegetarian for Life

I love revisiting Lasagne, a classic 1980s favourite that my dad would make as a Saturday night treat, served with chips, naturally. It still evokes strong memories of family life, which is the magic of nostalgic food. Today, I make my childhood favourite vegan, using green lentils, roasted peppers and aubergines, with a creamy sauce made from oat milk, vegan cheese and yeast flakes. Modernising retro dishes is about keeping their original charm while making simple, thoughtful swaps – reducing fat or sugar, using plant-based or gluten-free ingredients, and refreshing the presentation. Our free Veganising Classic Dishes resource shows how, with recipes including Lasagne, Moussaka, Lancashire Hotpot, Lemon Drizzle Cake and Eton Mess – proving that classic favourites can be reinvented for today's diners.



REBEKHA WHITE
Senior Brand Manager, Aimia for Professionals

Customers often think fondly about their favourite childhood treats and many operators are tapping into this by incorporating nostalgic flavours into their dishes. Many of these products will also capitalise on the growth of fusion bakes, combining the format and flavours of popular standalone items into one innovative serve. This appeals to customers looking for comforting flavours whilst also providing a new and unique offering. For such dishes, malt can be a popular ingredient, thanks to its sweet, lightly toasted flavour, which is often associated with traditional, childhood sweets. And the appeal of malt only increases if this is from a long-standing and recognisable brand like Horlicks. Whether it's a malty Sticky Toffee Pudding and Ice Cream or a classic Victoria Sponge, Horlicks can be used to enhance a variety of bakes and desserts: simply add a scoop of Horlicks into the batter! One of our favourite retro recipes is our Rhubarb and Strawberry Crumble with Horlicks Custard.



NICK VADASZ
Chef & Founder, Vadasz Pickles & Ferments

From vibrant canapés and showstopping starters to colourful sides and clever leftover ideas, my fermented favourites are the secret to adding bold flavour to retro dishes with minimal effort.

Whether you're entertaining guests, creating a seasonal feast or making the most of what's left in the fridge, dishes such as Red & Green Devilled 'Pickled' Eggs showcase the versatility of kimchi, sauerkraut and pickled vegetables in fresh and unexpected ways. The fiery red kimchi and fresh green jalapeño fillings create a colourful Christmas canapé with a fermented twist.



STEPHEN GRIFFITHS
Development Chef, Henley Bridge

When it comes to retro desserts, Baked Alaska is an absolute classic, featuring a layer of cake topped with ice cream and encased in meringue which is flash-baked in the oven or torched.

For Autumn/Winter 2026, we've given it an update using on-trend flavours by replacing the ice cream with a white chocolate crème brûlée centre topped with a dome of rosewater Turkish Delight. Pidy's plain sponge sheets make life easier, and we used Essential Cuisine crème anglaise mix to make the crème brûlée. Finish with a sprinkling of chopped pistachios and serve on a bowl of dry ice for added drama.

Victoria Sponge with raspberry jam and fresh cream





*Circana (UK) Ltd. All Outlets, UK, Hot Coffee by Major Brand, Value Sales, 52WE 18 Apr 2026



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96013710	7" Yorkshire Pudding	20 x 115g
96013636	Carvery Yorkshire Pudding	10 x 445g
96013747	2" Yorkshire Pudding	4 x 900g
96013750	Yorkshire Bases	24 x 150g
96014293	Stuffing Balls	6 x 676g

EAT THE SEASON



Goose



Traditionally devoured at Christmas before turkeys started to rule the roost, goose has a long culinary tradition in the UK as well as being enjoyed around the world.

With recent projects including Parisians at Public House in France and reopening The Georgian at Harrods, pie deviant and widely acclaimed 'King of Pies' Calum Franklin, is back with his latest venture - House of Pies. Working alongside top chefs Paul Shearing and Hervé Deville, Calum is already raising the bar across foodservice and taking pies to new frontiers. We caught up with Calum for some seasonal inspiration for utilising goose.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Often referred to as liquid gold, goose fat truly is a special ingredient so don't waste a drop. As well as helping to create superb potatoes, goose fat can be used in a hot water pastry as a substitute for lard. It gives you a beautifully crisp finish to the pastry.

1/ HISTORIC PIES

Something truly unique that you won't see every day, I came across a goose pie recipe while researching The Modern Pie Maker. It's about 300 years old and a historic thing of beauty. It's made with hot water pastry, and the filling showcases slow-cooked goose breast, minced thighs and brandy-soaked prunes.



2/ BEAUTIFUL BALLOTINE

I've always made goose ballotine at Christmas. I take the goose legs, debone them and flatten them out before stuffing them and slowly cooking them. They're delicious.



3/ THAI TWIST

Geese actually work their muscles quite a lot, so they have a strong flavour that I think works well with classic Thai ingredients. I confit the legs so they flake down and then take the breasts off and poach them very gently. I would then make a stock with the poaching liquid adding lemongrass and chilli. The different elements could be used separately or served together with noodles.



4/ ROYALLY ROASTED

While turkey rules the Christmas table these days, roast goose prepared well takes some serious beating and is a real spectacle. Juicy, rich meat, deliciously golden crisp skin and full-flavoured fat for the finest roast potatoes.

Serve up *smiles!*



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SURVIVE AND THRIVE DURING THE CHRISTMAS RUSH



Christmas service puts every part of a catering operation under pressure. But careful planning, efficient systems and the right tools can help your team keep service running smoothly when every second counts. Here are Wrapmaster's practical tips for getting festive-ready.

PRO TIP
Test your Christmas menu during a quieter November service to identify any timing or execution issues before the rush begins.



KEEP YOUR CHRISTMAS MENU FOCUSED

A streamlined menu is easier to execute consistently than an extensive one. Rather than overhauling everything, concentrate on dishes your kitchen can deliver well under pressure.

- Choose dishes that can be partially or fully prepared in advance.
- Use shared ingredients across dishes to simplify ordering and reduce waste.
- Offer two or three standout festive specials.
- Have clear vegetarian, vegan and allergen-free options ready.



STOCK UP, THEN PREP AHEAD

Running out of key ingredients at peak service is a scenario every kitchen wants to avoid. Order non-perishables and frozen items early, build buffer stock of high-demand ingredients and keep storage clearly labelled, dated and operating on a first-in, first-out basis. Assign someone to carry out daily stock checks and flag shortages quickly. A detailed prep schedule can make service smoother. Prepare freezable stocks, sauces and pastry the week before; tackle vegetables, proteins and desserts two days out; then complete your mise en place, stations and team briefing the day before. Delegate tasks according to your team's strengths and experience.

GET EVERYONE SERVICE-READY

Good communication matters when the pressure rises. Use pre-service briefings to cover the menu, specials, allergen information and bookings, and make sure kitchen and front-of-house teams are aligned on timings and expectations.



TAKE CONTROL OF THE BOOKINGS

Avoid unnecessary pressure by staggering reservations 15–30 minutes apart. Communicate deposits, cancellation policies and group menu options upfront, confirm bookings a few days beforehand and, when you're full, resist squeezing in extra covers at the expense of service quality.

MAKE EVERY SECOND COUNT

Small everyday frustrations become much bigger during a packed Christmas service. Wrapmaster dispensers for cling film, foil and parchment help by providing a precise cut and allowing you to pull and cut in one motion. The roll stays securely in place, avoiding tangled messes, while the concealed blade reduces the risk of staff injury and the enclosed design helps reduce cross-contamination.

Preparation is the key to thriving through Christmas: plan carefully, organise early, brief your team and use tools that help streamline the kitchen.

Want more practical tips for surviving the festive rush? Scan the QR code for Wrapmaster's full Christmas survival guide.

CHRISTMAS SURVIVAL CHECKLIST

GET AHEAD BEFORE THE RUSH

- ☐ ORDER NON-PERISHABLES AND FROZEN ITEMS EARLY
- ☐ BUILD BUFFER STOCK OF HIGH-DEMAND INGREDIENTS
- ☐ LABEL AND DATE EVERYTHING CLEARLY
- ☐ CARRY OUT DAILY STOCK CHECKS
- ☐ CREATE A DETAILED PREP SCHEDULE
- ☐ COMPLETE FINAL MISE EN PLACE AND BRIEF THE TEAM THE DAY BEFORE SERVICE

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tidings of Great Joy

Why Seasonal Seafood Deserves a Place on Your Festive Menu

Turkey will always take pride of place on tables in December, but the plates around it are changing. Amidst the copious array of rich food, diners are also looking for something celebratory that will still leave room for dessert. Seafood can be the light, bright antidote to all that roasting and braising, and winter also just happens to be the finest time of year for British and Irish shellfish.



FRESH MUSSELS WITH LEMON

WHAT'S IN SEASON

Native oysters run from September to the end of April, mussels are at their fullest between October and February, and hand-dived scallops come into their own during the winter months too. Rounding out the category are brown crab, langoustines and clams which deliver fresh flavour at a fraction of the cost of a fillet steak.

The catch of the day isn't limited to shellfish either, halibut, brill, monkfish and hake are readily available and take winter flavours and different cooking techniques without falling apart. At the other end of the scale, sprats, herring and sardines are available in volume through the cold months, are highly cost-effective and cure, pickle or grill beautifully. Devilled sprats with a wedge of lemon make a great bar snack for very little money.

"We're serving hand-dived scallops from Loch Broom, creel-caught langoustines landed locally, and halibut, which I'm particularly enjoying working with just now," says David Smith, Head Chef at The Dipping Lugger in Ullapool. "Being so close to the source means we're able to build dishes around what's at its absolute best."

GETTING INSPIRED WITH SEASONAL SERVES

The party season is a real opportunity for seafood to shine, with canapés, grazing boards and sharing platters delivering a sense of occasion and cost efficiencies. Early starts to the day can be made extra special with smoked haddock and a poached egg, kedgeree with warming spice, or potted shrimp melting into hot toast. Lunch menus can hero chowder, mussel and leek pie or crab rarebit for a luxurious take on a light-bite staple.

"We're seeing chefs increasingly turn to mussels because they're versatile and deliver that premium feel without adding complexity to service," says Gavin McLean, Managing Director of 555 Amanda UK. "Ambient mussels are ideal for festive dishes such as creamy garlic mussels, seafood linguine, chowders or tapas-style sharing boards. Roe is another great festive ingredient. It works brilliantly in canapés, smoked fish pâtés and fishcakes, offering something a little different while delivering excellent value."

The instinct at Christmas is to add, but when it comes to seafood, restraint is best. "We keep the cooking quite simple and let the quality of the seafood speak for itself," says Chef Simon Ball of Chef Ball Catering and Events. "With seasonal fish such as Cornish sea bream, we like pan-roasting or grilling, which brings out the natural flavour while giving the skin a good crispness. Steaming clams and mussels gently allows their sweetness and salinity to come through. We like to pair them with lemon, herbs, fennel, tomatoes, garlic and white wine, using acidity to lift the dish and balance the richness." Acidity is the secret weapon on a festive menu. Everything else on the table is rich, so a squeeze of citrus or a sharp pickle stops the whole meal feeling too heavy.

For a bit of indulgence, smoked shellfish opens up different pairings. Gavin recommends smoked mussels with horseradish, crème fraîche, beetroot, rye bread or pickled vegetables for elegant canapés, and points to bisques dressed with cream and fresh herbs as a reliable starter. Samphire, celeriac, roasted roots and buttery mash all help create something comforting and celebratory too.

SMOKED FISH PÂTÉ ON RYE BREAD



Tips for making seafood the hero this Christmas

- **Shellfish peaks in the cold months, so mussels, scallops, oysters, clams and brown crab are at their best and keenest price**
- **Herring, sprats and cold water prawns deliver big flavour for very little outlay**
- **Keep cooking simple, and use acidity to cut through rich festive food**
- **Adapt dishes customers recognise rather than launch something unfamiliar in your busiest weeks**
- **Buy whole where you can and turn shells and trimmings into stock, bisque or sauce**
- **Look for MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) or ASC (Aquaculture Stewardship Council) accreditation, and tell customers the story on the menu**

"Christmas is all about indulgence, but seafood doesn't need heavy treatment to feel luxurious."

Gavin McLean, Managing Director, 555 Amanda UK



GIVING THE CLASSICS A REFIT

Reworking a familiar dish beats inventing a new one as customers tend to order what they recognise. At The Dipping Lugger, David has taken a Scottish institution and turned it inside out. “I have a Cullen Skink inspired dish on the menu, but instead of serving it as the traditional hearty soup, I blend and pass it into a smooth sauce that’s served with the scallops. It keeps all those familiar smoked haddock flavours while creating something more suited to a modern seafood dish.”

Simon works the same way, building around the catch rather than forcing something into a fixed recipe. "A traditional fish stew or bouillabaisse can be built around the best available Cornish fish and shellfish, changing the ingredients depending on the catch. The key is to keep the foundations of the dish familiar while allowing the seafood to be the focus."

The key is to keep the foundations of the dish familiar, while allowing the seafood to be the focus.

Menu inspiration

- **A prawn cocktail comes alive with brown crab and homemade Marie Rose**
- **Roe turns a standard fishcake into a starter worth charging for**
- **Mussels dropped into a seafood pie lift it into a festive special**
- **Salt-baked whole turbot or sea bass cracked open and carved at the table is a sharing centrepiece to rival a roast**
- **A kedgeree Scotch egg or smoked haddock and leek sausage roll is finger food familiar enough to reassure diners, but new enough to engage them**

MAKING THE MARGINS WORK

Seafood has a reputation for being expensive, and it can be if you buy badly and have high volumes of wastage. To maximise your margins, David suggests working with what's in season. "Not only is the quality at its best, but you're also often getting better value," he says. "It's important to use as much of the product as possible. Making sauces or stocks from shells and trimmings helps maximise flavour while reducing waste."

Cross-utilisation of ingredients throughout the menu is another big waste-saving tip. "Choosing ingredients that work across multiple dishes also helps improve profitability," says Gavin. "A lobster bisque, for example, could work beautifully as a standalone ingredient but also be the base of a seafood pasta sauce, a sauce for fish dishes or to elevate a fish pie."

As we head into the busiest time of year for the sector, somewhere between the canapés and the cheeseboard there's room for a dish that gives diners time to pause in a month of very familiar food. Winter seafood is at its best right when you need it most. Keep it simple, seasonal, and let the quality speak for itself.







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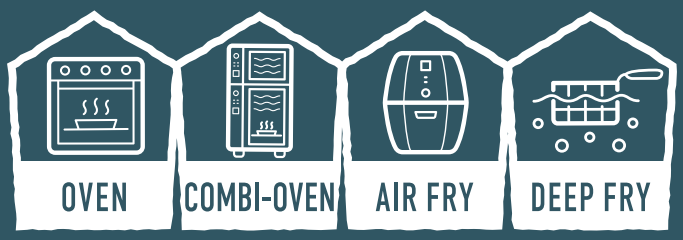


STOCK UP ON YOUR CHRISTMAS FAVOURITES NOW!

Source: Circana (UK) Ltd, Foodservice, UK, Gravy Granules (Category Defined by Premier Foods), Value Sales, 12 ME May 2026*



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FLO'S PLACE IN THE PARK

A supreme social enterprise success story, Flo's Café opened its doors in Oxford in October 2018 and in the last financial year alone, helped provide 6,788 free meals to the community.



The incredible hub came about when a children's centre closed in the local park due to budget cuts. Posing serious issues for many families, a group of locals proposed to use the redundant space for a community-run, enterprise-funded centre that would be sustainable in the longer term.

The Community Benefit Society 'People Place and Participation Ltd' was established in October 2018 and Flo's – The Place in the Park – opened its doors. Open 365 days a year, Flo's has become the heart of the community, employing over 50 people across the nursery, café, refill shop, community team and operations team.

Flo's Café and Refill Shop are run by Mustafa Keskin, who graduated in chemistry before moving to the UK in 2007 to improve his English and pursue a master's degree. Along the way, he found himself working in hospitality and discovered that he loved it.



"I had to work to pay for my studies and living costs, so I gained employment in a variety of pubs and restaurants," says Mustafa. "At the beginning I loved it, but after a while I felt there was a lot of greed and waste in the sector. I decided I didn't want to make someone richer, but my community richer. I applied for a role at Flo's four years ago and I have loved it here from day one. It's about giving, not taking."

With a 'profit for purpose' approach, it was calculated that for every £1 of income generated, they are able to deliver £4 worth of social return to the community.

"I'm so proud of the hub we have created, the team working here, the food we offer and especially the free meals and support we provide for our community. When it started, we provided around 1,000 free meals per financial year. Now we're providing close to 7,000. It's very fulfilling and rewarding."



While the kitchen does serve meat, the menu is predominantly vegetarian. It concentrates on creative brunch dishes like Flo's Shakshuka, mains including a curry of the day and a mezze board, plus a wide selection of wraps, toasties and baguettes.

"The kitchen is always busy as in addition to paying customers, we provide free meals throughout the whole year through our Me&You scheme. On Mondays, we also run a donation-based community meal where people can enjoy a meal and contribute what they can. Kids can get a free lunch in the school holidays and we even cook up and provide 400 free lunches on Christmas Day."

"Our favourite dishes are our Halloumi & Falafel Wrap and our Turkish Breakfast. We use loads of Country Range products, especially the canned produce, which are excellent and fantastic value."

Flo's Café **www.flosoxford.org.uk**

Above main (left to right): Flo's Halloumi & Falafel Wrap alongside a Turkish Breakfast

Flo's Cafe offers free kids lunches during the summer holidays

Left: Flo's Cafe Menu is offered on a free pay-as-you-can basis on Mondays

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CHOCOLATE Cherry Muffins

After starting as a junior in the kitchens at Sedbergh School as a 13-year-old, 45 years later Jenny Hoyes is still there and feeding the future, albeit with a few school breaks in between.

"I wanted to be a police officer but there just wasn't the money for my education and mum needed me to earn," says Jenny. "I started at Sedbergh in my early teens and the school has been a part of my life, on and off for 45 years now."

Born and bred in Sedbergh, Jenny honed her kitchen skills at the famous school for three years before taking up an apprenticeship in bookkeeping. From there she worked in various admin roles before concentrating on being a mum.

However, when the opportunity arose to return to Sedbergh, she jumped at it. Initially beginning again as a cleaner, it wasn't long before Jenny was back cooking at the stoves. "I absolutely love the school, the people and my job. It's like a big, extended family and it's that family mealtime experience that we want to try and recreate, just on a larger scale. We do great curries, enchiladas, street food, roasts, classics like cottage pie and we have a fish and chip night. Many of the pupils are involved in sports so we also ensure there are plenty of pasta dishes for fuel before games. We use Country Range products across the kitchens and it's a brand that never lets you down. My Chocolate Cherry Muffin recipe is quick and easy to make but a real treat that can be used for multiple occasions and across the day."



JENNY HOYES

SERVES: 6

CREDIT: JENNY HOYES

COOKING TIME: 25 MINUTES

RECIPE · RECIPE ·

INGREDIENTS

- 125g Country Range Plain Flour
- 25g Country Range Cocoa Powder
- 5g Country Range Baking Powder
- 100g Country Range Red Cherry Fruit Filling
- 60g Caster Sugar
- 1 large egg
- 30ml extended life oil
- 100ml whole milk
- 50g milk chocolate callets



METHOD

1. Heat oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas 4 and line a muffin tin with six cases.

2. Sieve the flour, baking powder and cocoa into a medium bowl.

3. Separately mix together the sugar, egg, oil and milk.

4. Gradually pour the wet mixture into the dry and combine before adding the chocolate callets and the cherry filling.

5. Spoon into the cases and bake for 20-25 mins. Probe with a knife and ensure it comes out clear of wet mixture.

6. Allow to cool and top with whipped cream or sprinkle with icing sugar.



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Image credit: Howard Sooley

Jacob KENEDY

CHEF/PATRON, BOCCA DI LUPO



WIN

For your chance to win a copy of Pasta Tricolore turn to page 71.



With the acclaimed Bocca di Lupo, Gelupo and a pub – not to mention the several best-selling books under his belt, Jacob Kenedy has been a leading light in London's food scene for over 20 years.

What are your memories of food growing up?
My early food memories are all related to pasta. I remember being a kid and both my parents cooking for me. Spaghetti with tomato sauce, spaghetti with meatballs, which featured very highly on my list of esteemed foods, ravioli with butter and sage, and spaghetti with pesto.

You don't have any Italian blood in the veins - why did pasta feature so heavily?
My mum grew up in Rome in the 50's and 60's so Italian is one of her first languages. She grew up on their cuisine, honeymooned in Italy with my dad for a year and we've kept a family home there ever since. Italy was always very much part of our lives.

How did food become a career?
I had a period as a youth when I kept on changing my mind about what I wanted to be. I decided on a gap year. Moro had just opened in Exmouth Market, and I was eating there one day with my family. I was blown away by the food, and my mum encouraged me to see if I could work there for a few days in the kitchen.

What did you do?
I found the courage and spoke to one of the Sams, asking if I could come and spend one week there. They kindly agreed to my request (insisting I finish school first) and I quickly fell in love with the restaurant, the life and camaraderie of the professional kitchen.

How did you progress?
I was still planning to go to Cambridge, but I just loved the work at Moro. After six months of my gap year at Moro, I headed to San Francisco to work in the kitchen at Boulevard. I cut my teeth in those two kitchens with truly great chefs who are still very important parts of my life today.

How did you get into the Italian side of the culinary world?
I was a bit naughty and took another gap year after university, which I spent travelling around Italy. Initially, it was just as a voyage but in retrospect it turned into the research that led to Bocca di Lupo, Gelupo and ultimately, my new book.

How far ahead were you thinking at this point?
I wasn't thinking too far ahead, but I reached a point where I had been working for Moro on and off for a good chunk of time. Then Nancy Oakes, who was my head chef and boss at Boulevard, offered me experience opening a second restaurant. I went out to help her open it as a chance to learn about what was required to set up a business. After a year or so, I headed back to London to help Ollie Rowe (a friend from Moro) to open his restaurant. It was then that I seriously started to think about the kind of restaurant I wanted to create. That turned into Bocca di Lupo.

Three tips to set up your own business

1. **Stop before you do it and make sure you know what you're giving up. You do give up the freedom or ability to forget about work when you go to sleep. It may be worth it but make sure you're aware.**
2. **Don't try to make something for what you think other people might want; it is a dishonour to them. Don't second guess what people think or the market demands. Make something that you yourself love – there will be enough others who feel the same way.**
3. **Whether it's staff, suppliers or customers - make sure they're decent people.**

Tell us about your latest book - Pasta Tricolore: Recipes in Green, White and Red
I really love pasta, but I think a lot of cooks, both domestic and professional, don't fully understand how to get it exactly right. The starting premise of the book, which I actually hold to, is that there are only three or four recipes you need for pasta. Tomato, pesto, butter and sage and maybe bolognese. All the rest are just derivatives of these archetype sauces, and really are not as good. Those four are unbeatable. The book explores the classic pasta recipes with a contemporary eye. White sauces, green sauces and red sauces. The colours of the Italian flag.

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SQUASH SEASON

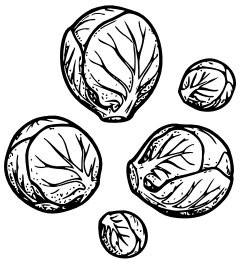
Pumpkin curry, or Wattakka curry, is a traditional and very common Sri Lankan dish. It's creamy, comforting and gently spiced, making it a perfect winter comfort dish for all ages. You can substitute pumpkin with whatever variety of squash is available (butternut squash works particularly well), which is cooked until tender with onion, green chilli, curry leaves, turmeric and other spices. Coconut milk gives the curry a creamy texture and balances the natural sweetness of the squash. I love it because you can use the whole vegetable, keeping the nutritious skin intact and roasting the seeds for a crunchy garnish.



Sri Lankan Style Winter Squash Curry

Making ends meet

STREET EATS



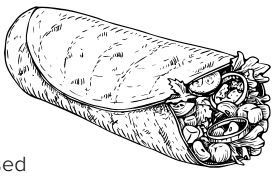
With an abundance of winter vegetables being used across menus this season, Paul Dickson suggests ways they can be incorporated into popular street food dishes, giving you more scope to make the most of what's in season and help to reduce waste.

Street food is all about big flavours, bold combinations and making simple ingredients shine. This month, I'm taking inspiration from the vibrant regional cuisines of India and Sri Lanka to give seasonal winter produce a fresh twist. Better still, all of these dishes are perfect for using up your leftover veg, giving you fresh ways to reduce waste, stretch ingredients further and bring something new to your specials board.



Paul is a Home Economist and food stylist working in London and the North West, creating exceptional visual stories in film & tv, on social media and in print. All of the recipes and videos featured in the article can be accessed online at **www.countryrange.co.uk/recipes** or by scanning the QR Code.

Roll With It



The kathi roll originated in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), West Bengal, and is generally associated with Nizam's restaurant, where kebabs were wrapped in paratha to create something convenient to eat on the move. The name "kathi" is linked to the skewers used for cooking the kebabs. Over time, the format evolved far beyond the original kebab version, with chicken, egg, paneer and vegetable fillings becoming popular. At its heart, it's a flaky paratha wrapped around a hot, highly seasoned filling, usually balanced with fresh, sharp accompaniments. This format works perfectly with a crunchy slaw made with shredded carrot, cabbage, onion and yes, you guessed it, even Brussels sprouts! Add chilli, lime and fresh coriander and serve with a cooling yoghurt dip or mango chutney.



Bengali Kathi Rolls

SPROUT OF THE ORDINARY

Love it or hate it, the humble Brussels sprout is a fixture on Christmas menus. This recipe is a great way to use up your classic festive veggies and the less presentable bits that often get discarded, while giving diners a different starter to the usual soup or prawn cocktail. Finely shred leftover or raw Brussels sprouts with carrot and parsnip, mix with gram flour, cumin, coriander, turmeric and chilli, then fry into crisp, irregular bhajis. Serve with a tamarind or yoghurt chutney.



Gujarati Sprout, Carrot & Parsnip Bhajis

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serving suggestion

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FIVE WAYS TO USE

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Created for the makers

5 ways to use SAUSAGE MEAT

This month our guest chef is FutureChef starlet and winner Kate Skinner. Born and bred in Aberdeenshire, Kate first began baking with her granny as a toddler before her teenage talent was spotted while cooking on a Duke of Edinburgh away day.

Kate didn't have the benefit of a mentor when first competing in FutureChef, but with support this year from Peter Thompson of BaxterStorey, she seriously wowed judges and took the crown. With a passion for creativity and experimentation, Kate dreams of being a private chef so who better to give us 'Five Ways' to use sausage meat.

PASTA MASTER

Pasta and sausage meat is a great combo. For a rich, spicy twist, I boost my sauce with 'nduja, spinach, tomato paste, garlic, chicken stock and cream before serving with orzo.

FAB FLATBREADS

Flatbreads are so versatile and I'm a huge fan. The recipe below crosses halloumi and sausage meat with a hit of hot honey and whipped feta.

BREAKFAST BURRITO

For an indulgent breakfast and one you can always have on-the-go, my favourite is a hash brown and sausage meat burrito loaded with cheese, avocado, salsa and smoky chipotle mayo.

ROLL ROYALTY

Nothing beats a sausage roll, and with it being a great time for British apples, my favourite at this time of year is a pork, apple and black pudding combo. There's real depth of flavour with sweet notes and punchy herbs.

PORKY RICE

I love to use sausage meat to make my honey, crispy sausage rice. I fry off bite-size pieces of sausage meat in a pan, so they are nice and crispy before serving them with jasmine rice and a super sticky sauce made with honey, ginger, soy sauce, rice wine vinegar and sweet chilli sauce.

Country Range Sausage Meat
Pack Size: 8 x 500g



RECIPE · RECIPE

Hot honey sausage and halloumi flatbreads



CREDIT: KATE SKINNER
SERVES: 4
COOKING TIME: 15 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

- 400g Country Range Sausage Meat
- 4tbsp Country Range Hot Honey
- 225g halloumi
- 1 red onion
- Bunch of rocket
- 4 flatbreads
- 150g feta
- 75g Greek yoghurt
- The juice of ½ lemon
- A good crack of black pepper

METHOD

1. Blend the feta, Greek yoghurt, lemon juice and black pepper until smooth.

2. Brown small pieces of sausage meat in a pan until crispy.

3. Grill halloumi until golden.

4. Warm flatbreads and then spread with whipped feta.

5. Top with the crisp sausage, halloumi, thinly sliced red onion and rocket.

6. Finish with plenty of hot honey.

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FORMAT	PRODUCT DESCRIPTION	CASE COUNT	UNIT WEIGHT
FROZEN UNBAKED	Limited Edition - Chicken Leek & Bacon Pie	24	245g

COMPLEAT FOODSERVICE
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With caterers under pressure to keep costs down, we caught up with the acclaimed Sunday Times bestselling author Amy Sheppard to hear about her latest book Speedy 10 and her route to savvy cookery stardom.

What are your first memories of food?
I grew up in Cornwall after moving from Essex as an 8-year-old. My mum was always a brilliant cook but we never had loads of money so it was good, honest home cooking. My brother was a vegetarian so we lived off budget-friendly veggie dinners but mum also always made a pudding from scratch every night. They're fond memories and they definitely shaped my own cookery. My mum was the first person who inspired me to cook.

Did you help out in the kitchen growing up?
Yes, my mum taught me a lot of the basics and many of those dishes I still cook now. I think that's where my love of comfort food comes from. The first recipe that I learned how to cook was a cauliflower cheese so every Sunday that was my job.

Rising Star

AMY SHEPPARD

CHEF AND AUTHOR



How did it become a career?
When I became a stay-at-home mum, it meant our family income was hit so I had to think like my mum and work extra hard to create nutritious tasty meals on a budget. I started to write them down and share them with other mums, friends and neighbours. At this stage I didn't have social media or anything like that but I decided to put an e-book together as they were all the rage at the time.

As I was (and still am) a big Aldi shopper, I called it the 'Aldi Lovers' Guide to Cooking'. After speaking to some journalists about the book and setting up a social media account, one day I woke up to my phone pinging constantly with new followers. My book had gone to number 1 in the Amazon book charts. I got my first proper publishing deal a year after that for a Savvy Shoppers Cookbook and I have now published a further three books.

What is it about your job you love?
I love the creativity – devising new twists or ideas for dishes. I'm also passionate about making the recipes accessible for all – whatever the budget, time allowance or a person's cookery experience.

Tell us about your new book?
Following on from my last book Easy 10, Speedy 10, it is similar in that it concentrates on 10 core ingredients that most people will have in their cupboard or fridge. We're all guilty of using certain ingredients the same way, so the book is filled with lots of recipes to help people mix things up but in a matter of minutes. In Speedy 10, all of the recipes can be made in less than 30 minutes but there are plenty of 15 and 20-minute dishes too, and that includes prep time as well.

Who are your food heroes?
Outside of my mum, it would be Jamie Oliver. When I first left home, Jamie Oliver was just kicking off his career with the Naked Chef so I followed him from the beginning.

Did you always eat well?
No. When I was at university, I lived off Pot Noodles and sliced white bread. In my early 20s, I decided I should eat a bit more like a grown-up and that's where Jamie Oliver's shows inspired me.

Do you still love your work?
I do. I still love what I do. I love posting. I love creating recipes and seeing the feedback. If I come up with a new idea, I still get really excited.

What are your long-term goals?
If I could carry on creating and publishing cookbooks, I would be incredibly happy. Like I said, my brother was vegetarian from a really young age, so we all ate vegetarian because it was easier. I'm still not a massive meat eater so I would love to do a vegetarian cookbook.

Have you worked in hospitality?
Yes, I worked in restaurants and bars from the age of 14 to fund me through my teens and university studies. It teaches you so much and builds confidence. I worked in a lot of pubs that served real comfort food so my love for it grew. I also picked up a lot of the techniques like how to chop onions or how to defrost prawns properly.

You also have to learn quickly in hospitality so it teaches you to think on your feet. I remember while at university I was working for an agency and was asked to go to an event in Bristol. When I arrived off the train, they asked if I knew silver service. I said yes and had to learn fast on-the-job.

What's the best advice you were given?
Be authentic – don't ever try and pretend to be something else. That works for food and life.

What do you consider your career highlight?
I think Easy 10 becoming a Sunday Times bestseller takes some beating. I never imagined that would happen in my wildest dreams.

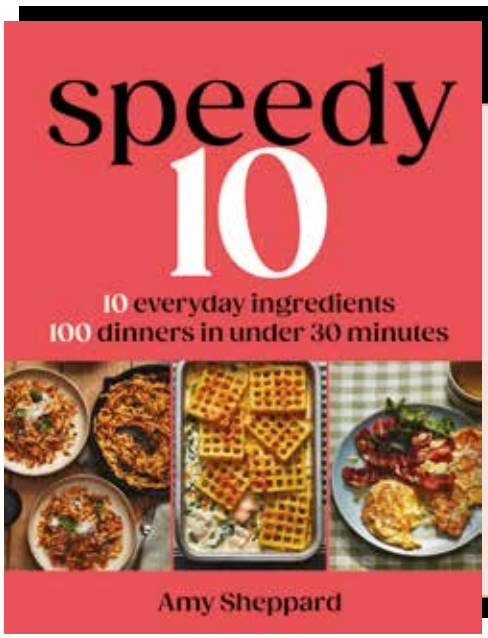
What was the last restaurant you ate at?
I ate at a pub called Polgooth Inn in London Apprentice in Cornwall. Utterly amazing.

What's your favourite pub?
We're really lucky because our village pub – The Long Rock - has just reopened. It's really lovely and run as a community project.

Do you have a drink of choice?
Pint of lager.

Do you have any guilty pleasures?
I still love noodles and love white sliced bread and butter to dip and mop up.

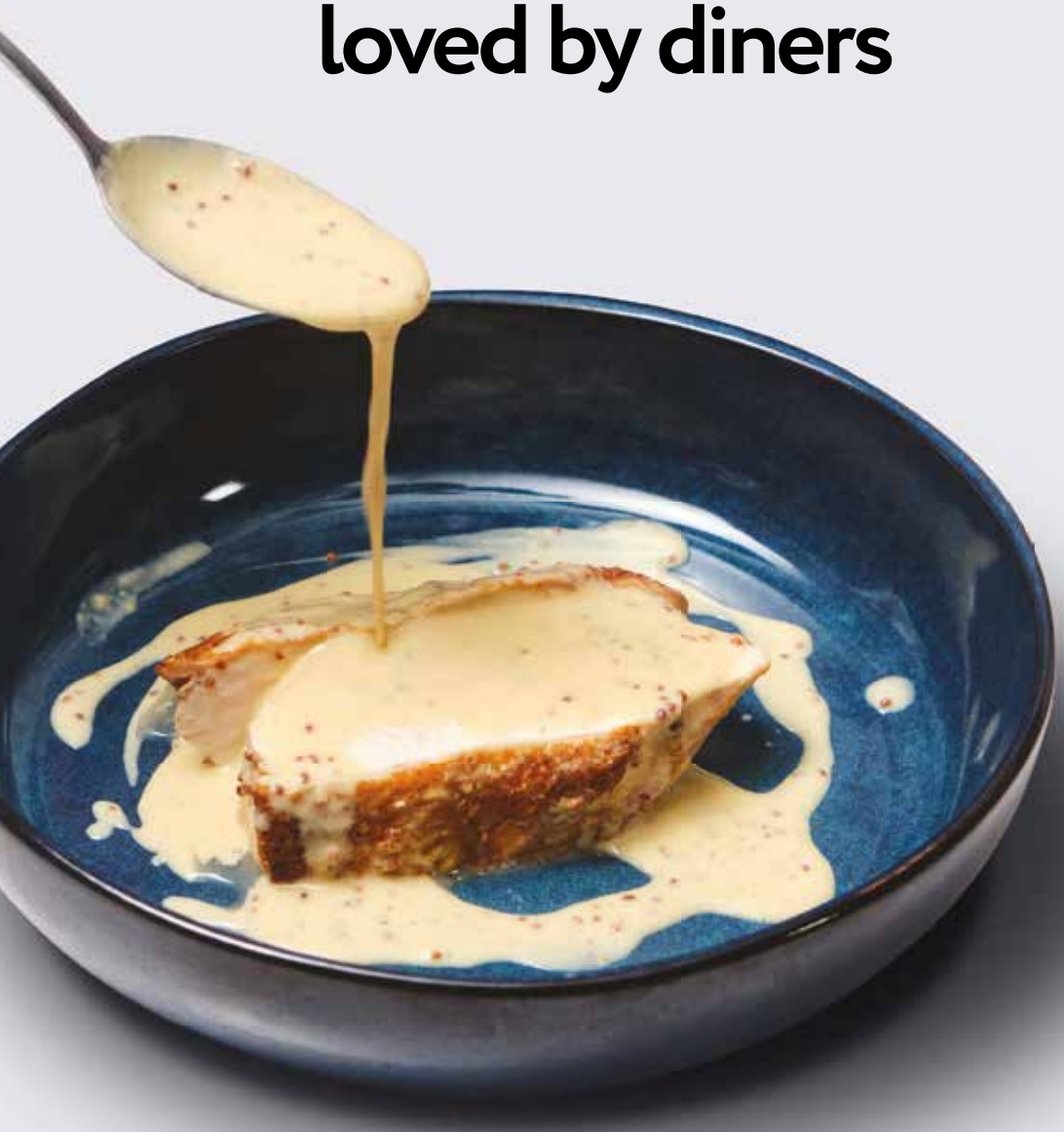
Can you share a signature dish for the winter months?
There is a recipe for a winter chicken lasagne in Speedy 10, which is great for the colder months. You can use leftover chicken and it's so simple to make.



Inside Speedy 10 you'll discover:

- **100 quick and affordable dinner recipes ready in 30 minutes or less**
- **Easy ingredient swaps and time-saving cooking tips**
- **Vegetarian, gluten-free and air fryer adaptations for many recipes**
- **Inspiration for busy weeknights and relaxed weekend favourites**

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NEW FROM

Country Range

Created for the makers

Christmas crackers

With just nine weeks to go until the end of the year, chefs across the foodservice sector have plenty on their plates. It's not just the busy month ahead or the fast-approaching festive season turning up the pressure in the kitchen, it's planning time for next year as well. But never fear, we have the ideas, solutions and products to help you finish the year in style.

NEW THIS SEASON

NEW

COUNTRY RANGE
PORK SAUSAGE MEAT
PACK SIZE: 8 X 500G

A fantastic ingredient 365 days of the year, our new Country Range Pork Sausage Meat comes frozen for convenience and can be used across the menu. Super for sausage rolls, stuffings, breakfast patties, meatballs and ragù to name a few, check out this month's 'Five Ways to Use' feature for extra inspiration from FutureChef winner Kate Skinner. For a showstopper worthy of a place on any festive dinner table, this sausage roll wreath recipe is a Christmas cracker.



Sausage Roll Wreath



Pork, Chicken, Apple & Cranberry Stuffing

Festive Scotch Egg



It's All or Stuffing

COUNTRY RANGE PORK, CHICKEN, APPLE & CRANBERRY STUFFING
PACK SIZE: 8 X 500G

No longer just a sideshow, stuffing has been getting a makeover in recent times with all manner of ingredients and combinations being used to boost flavour and generate excitement. Our new Country Range Pork, Chicken, Apple & Cranberry Stuffing is a sensational sidekick for any roast dinner, it's also a great way to pack flavour across your festive menu, such as this seasonal Scotch egg recipe.

SWEET **SURRENDER**

We're excited to have launched our latest Country Range desserts in time for the season of serious indulgence. Made with the finest ingredients and bursting with visual appeal, the four new sweets are pre-portioned and showcase tasty twists on classic desserts.

COUNTRY RANGE PANETTONE BREAD & BUTTER PUDDING
1 X 18 PRE-PORTIONED
A beautiful brioche base topped with torn pieces of blissfully, buttery panettone baked in a sweetened egg mixture. Topped with demerara sugar, mixed spice, mixed peel and sultanas.



COUNTRY RANGE ITALIAN STYLE PLUM TART
1 X 12 PRE-PORTIONED
A shortcrust pastry case filled with an almond-flavoured sponge and loaded with a plum and apple fruit filling. Topped with an orange glaze and a sprinkle of hazelnuts, this terrific tart has a 57% fruit content and brilliant when used on a counter display to entice customers.

COUNTRY RANGE RHUBARB & CUSTARD CRUMBLE TORTE
1 X 14 PRE-PORTIONED
A truly iconic combination redefined in torte form, we're expecting BIG things from this innovative, yet retro dessert. Hitting a bullseye on the nostalgia trend board, it's a crowd pleaser for all ages and features a vanilla sponge topped with rhubarb compote and a custard flavour cheesecake. If that wasn't enough, it's then finished with a crunchy crumble topping.

COUNTRY RANGE STICKY TOFFEE GINGER PARKIN
1 X 19 PRE-PORTIONED
A twist on the much-loved sticky toffee pudding, this majestically moist parkin is made with sweet pear halves and topped with an irresistible, sticky treacle syrup and ginger crumble.

NEW FROM

Country Range
Created for the makers

Signature by Country Range Sweet Treats

If there is a time to bring out the big guns, it's certainly during the festive season so don't forget to check out and unwrap our Signature by Country Range portfolio this Christmas. Fantastic for adding a little extra glitz to a dish or your menu, our Signature Dough Balls, Pies, Fries, Sausages, Mash and recently launched single-serve sweet treats including our Banoffee Tarts, individual Salted Caramel, Chocolate & Profiterole Desserts or Deep Fill Passionfruit Tarts are certain to cause a stir.

A RANGE BUILT FOR THE FESTIVE RUSH.

"I use so many Country Range products that it is impossible to pick a favourite. The quality is excellent." – **Head Chef**



Country Range Sticky Toffee Ginger Parkin



Deep Fill Passionfruit Tart

Banoffee Tarts

Salted Caramel, Chocolate and Profiterole Dessert

Signature by Country Range

Sleigh Waste This Season

Here are a couple of sharer dishes to have up your sleeve for your specials board to make sure nothing goes to waste from your festive menus.

SCAN HERE for more recipe inspiration from Country Range.

RECIPE · RECIPE ·

CHRISTMAS LOADED POTATO CRUNCHIES

Use your festive leftovers to load up some crisp, fluffy Potato Crunchies. A versatile sharer to serve at any time of day.

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

- 400g Country Range Potato Crunchies
- 8g cooked and sliced Country Range Pigs in Blankets
- 50g Country Range Cranberry Sauce
- 25g Country Range Grated Cheddar
- 75g shredded cooked turkey
- 4 quartered sage and onion stuffing balls

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan / 200°C oven.
2. Cook the Potato Crunchies according to packet instructions.
3. Place in an ovenproof dish and top with the pigs in blankets, shredded turkey, stuffing and grated cheddar.
4. Place in the oven for five minutes to melt the cheese and warm the toppings.
5. Finish with cranberry sauce and serve with warm leftover gravy.





When it comes to store cupboard classics the Country Range brand never lets you down Spices seasonings flours it is fantastic quality and excellent value. – Head Chef

NEW FROM

Country Range

Created for the makers



CHRISTMAS PUDDING BALLS

RECIPE

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

- 50g Country Range Cranberry Sauce
- 50g Country Range Plain Flour
- 50g Country Range Cornflour
- 1/4tsp Country Range Salt
- 200g leftover Christmas pudding
- 100ml lemonade
- 25g icing sugar to dust

METHOD

1. Shape the cooked leftover Christmas pudding into small balls and keep to one side.

2. Make the batter by mixing the cornflour, plain flour and salt together. Add ice-cold lemonade and whisk until smooth.

3. Coat each ball, one by one, in a little cornflour, dip in the batter and deep-fry until they float and are a nice colour.

4. Dust with icing sugar and serve with cranberry sauce.

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Make the sharing board the one everyone gathers around.
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Serving suggestion

Serving suggestion



BREAKFAST MEETS MEDITERRANEAN FIRE!
Give the vegetarian breakfast a YAMAS! makeover.
Crispy Chilli Halloumi Bites bring a delicious hit of chilli, irresistible crunch and that unmistakable halloumi flavour to a breakfast classic.
Same great tradition.
A whole new attitude!



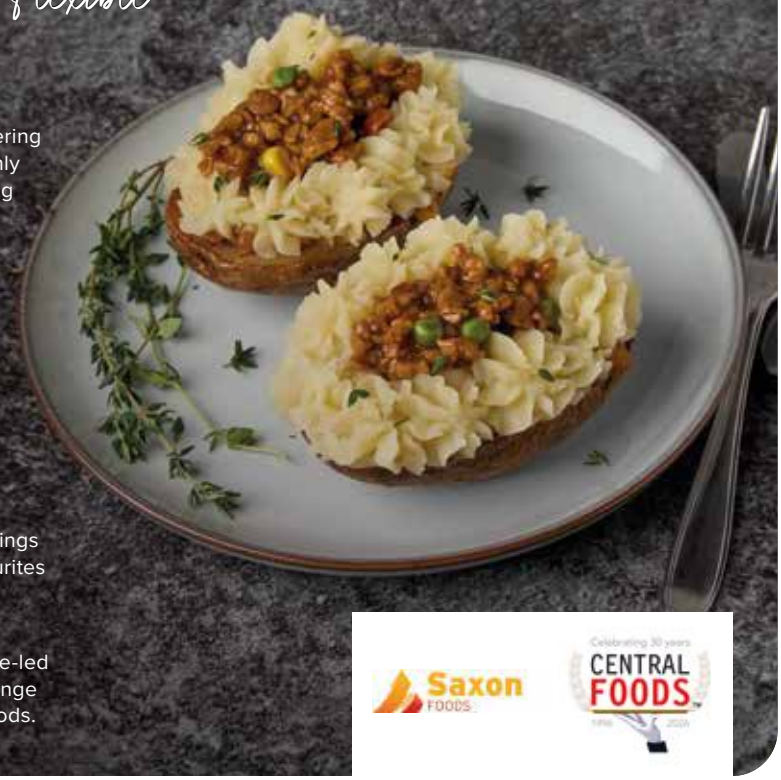
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THE MARKETPLACE

Keeping you up-to-date on products and services within the foodservice industry

Ready Baked Potatoes Offer Flexible Solution for Busy Kitchens



Jacket potatoes are making a welcome comeback, offering foodservice operators an affordable, versatile and highly customisable menu option. Central Foods is responding to this demand through a new partnership with Saxon Foods, adding a range of frozen ready baked jacket potatoes to its portfolio.

Available in Small, Standard, Large and XL sizes, the range is designed to suit everything from grab-and-go lunches to substantial dine-in meals. Cooked from frozen in the microwave or oven, the potatoes can help busy kitchens reduce preparation time, minimise waste and deliver consistent results.

For operators across schools, hospitals, universities, cafés, garden centres and workplace catering, their versatility is a key advantage. Existing fillings and toppings can be used to create everything from traditional favourites to more premium, loaded options.

The partnership is particularly relevant as operators look to maximise ingredient utilisation and deliver value-led menus without adding unnecessary complexity. The range is now available to UK wholesalers through Central Foods.



A CENTURY OF BAKING CELEBRATED WITH LIMITED EDITION PIE

Wrights is celebrating an impressive 100 years of baking in 2026 with a limited-edition Centenary Chicken, Leek & Bacon Pie, created in partnership with chef and Great British Menu star Thom Bateman.

The premium pie brings together chicken thigh, leek and bacon in a rich, creamy filling, wrapped in cheese shortcrust pastry, topped with a puff pastry lid and finished with a bacon-flavoured crumb. It's a fitting celebration of Wrights' century-long baking heritage, while bringing a contemporary chef's perspective to a much-loved foodservice staple.

For operators, the appeal is also practical. Supplied frozen and unbaked, the pie offers chefs a premium menu option that requires minimal preparation, helping deliver a high-quality, indulgent serve without adding unnecessary complexity to the kitchen.

It's a nice example of how heritage and modern foodservice convenience can work together, giving operators a distinctive centenary product with plenty of menu appeal.

THE MARKETPLACE

Keeping you up-to-date on products and services within the foodservice industry



Warm Up Winter Menus with Seasonal Drinks

With winter now in full swing, MONIN's latest seasonal inspiration offers foodservice operators plenty of ideas for making drinks a bigger part of the festive and winter customer experience.

The collection brings together warming, indulgent flavours including chai, gingerbread, winter spice and hot chocolate, alongside contemporary options such as matcha and fruit-led serves. The recipes provide inspiration for cafés, restaurants, bars and other foodservice operators looking to add seasonal variety and create drinks that feel distinctive and timely.

For operators, the versatility is particularly appealing, with flavours that can be incorporated across hot drinks, cocktails and other menu occasions. This provides an opportunity to introduce limited-time serves, premiumise familiar favourites and encourage customers to treat themselves during the colder months.

With consumers looking for comforting and indulgent experiences at this time of year, seasonal drinks can be a relatively simple way to add excitement to the menu while creating additional opportunities to drive spend.

Find more seasonal menu ideas and inspiration at **https://monin1912.com/en-ukpro/pages/downloadable-resources**

HYBRID WORKING RESHAPES HOW BRITAIN EATS

The way Britain eats is changing, with traditional breakfast, lunch and dinner routines increasingly replaced by snacking, grab-and-go meals and flexible eating occasions. Research highlighted by Macphie shows more than 80% of UK consumers snack between meals, while 60% of office workers eat lunch at their desks.

Hybrid working, busy lifestyles and the growing popularity of informal eating styles such as snack plates and grazing are creating demand for convenient, flexible and portion-controlled products. The decline of family mealtimes is another sign of this shift, with just 43% of families eating together every day.

For caterers the opportunity is to develop dishes that work across multiple occasions rather than being tied to a specific meal. Think individually portioned options, shareable formats and food that travels well. As eating habits continue to evolve, flexibility looks set to become increasingly important.





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The calm kitchen

Adjusting Your Leadership Style Protects Your Team's Mental Health



The tide may be changing away from the old-school methods of leadership in kitchens, but Hospitality Action's Taking the Temperature 2025 survey still found that 62% of junior staff believe burnout is simply part of the job - a number that is still too high for many newcomers to the industry.

The way you treat and speak to your team changes what they produce, how they feel about their job, their willingness to learn, and ultimately, their mental health. That's not sentiment; it's a measured finding, and it's been tested in environments every bit as pressured as a kitchen.

RUDENESS COSTS

In a randomised trial, 24 neonatal intensive care teams ran the same emergency simulation. Half were exposed to mildly rude remarks from a visiting observer, comments that weren't even about their work. Their diagnostic and procedural scores dropped significantly. They shared less information with each other and asked for help less often. Peter Bamberger, one of the researchers, said the size of the effect was roughly double that of sleep deprivation.

Swap the environment for a Saturday service and the mechanism is the same. A commis who has just been humiliated by their boss stops asking questions, and the question they don't ask could be the one about an allergen.

"Hospitality Action's Taking the Temperature 2025 survey still found that 62% of junior staff believe burnout is simply part of the job - a number that is still too high for many newcomers to the industry."

Separate experiments have revealed similar results, with a significant percentage of those mistreated either deliberately reducing their effort, producing fewer ideas, or taking frustration out on customers.

PRAISE IS A PERFORMANCE TOOL

The reverse is just as measurable. Gallup and Workhuman tracked more than 3,400 employees from 2022 to 2024 and found those receiving high-quality recognition were 45% less likely to have left their job. A separate Gallup analysis found that where organisations doubled the number of staff recognised in the past week, productivity rose 9% and safety incidents fell 22%. In a room full of knives, fryers and wet floors, that last figure earns its place.

Ultimately, every employee who stays is a recruitment fee you don't have to pay, a training cycle you don't repeat and a level of consistency that agency cover can't match.

Calm kitchens make fewer mistakes, so waste falls and dishes leave the pass looking the way they should. Teams that feel supported flag problems early, whether that's a fridge on the turn or a rota that isn't working. All this could be achieved by leading with purpose, mutual respect, and demonstrating your duty of care.

SMALL CHANGES, REAL RESULTS

Leadership habits are learned, which means they can be relearned. A handful of adjustments make a difference within weeks:

- Brief the team before service so expectations are clear and nobody is guessing under pressure.
- Correct the mistake rather than the person, and do it away from the pass where you can.
- Ask a question before making an assumption.
- Protect breaks and finish times as firmly as you'd protect a food safety standard.
- Say thank you in front of others, and be specific about what earned it.

"The way you treat and speak to your team changes what they produce, how they feel about their job."



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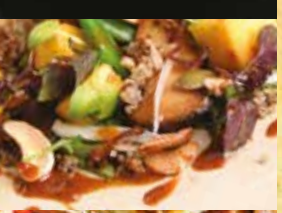
With intelligent barcode technology, the machine recognises each Vertuo capsule and automatically adjusts the brewing parameters for the perfect extraction. There's no complicated set-up either, simply pop in your chosen capsule, press the button and let the machine do the work.

The Vertuo Next also boasts a 1.1 litre water tank, making it a practical choice for busy kitchens where great coffee needs to keep flowing.

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Win the Ultimate Amy Sheppard Cookbook Duo



Inspired by this month's Rising Star interview with Amy Sheppard, we're giving one lucky reader the chance to win both of her brilliant 10-ingredient cookbooks: Speedy 10 and Easy 10.

First up is Speedy 10: 10 Everyday Ingredients, 100 Dinners in Under 30 Minutes, the ultimate guide for busy cooks who want delicious food without spending hours in the kitchen. Packed with 100 quick, affordable and family-friendly recipes, Amy proves that everyday ingredients can be transformed into exciting meals in 30 minutes or less. Expect clever combinations, handy swaps and plenty of inspiration for getting dinner on the table fast.

Then there's Easy 10: 10 Everyday Ingredients, 100 Fuss-free Dinner Recipes, designed to make everyday cooking feel wonderfully simple. With 100 straightforward recipes built around familiar ingredients, Amy takes the stress out of mealtimes while keeping things full of flavour. It's a brilliant source of inspiration for anyone looking for practical, achievable dishes that don't require complicated techniques or hard-to-find ingredients.

Together, these two cookbooks make a fantastic addition to any kitchen, whether you're short on time, looking for easy family-friendly meals or simply want fresh ideas for making the most of everyday staples.

For your chance to win, enter online or send an email titled 'Amy Sheppard!' along with your name, contact details and name of your Country Range Group wholesaler to **competitions@stiritupmagazine.co.uk**

Closing date for the competition is 31st December 2026. All winners will be notified by 29th January 2027. Postal entries can be sent to: Country Range Group, 4 & 5 Jupiter House, Mercury Rise, Altham Business Park, Altham, Lancashire, BB5 5BY. Full terms and conditions can be found at: **www.stiritupmagazine.co.uk/**



GO GREEN, WHITE & RED WITH JACOB KENEDY!

Few things capture the spirit of Italian cooking quite like pasta, and Pasta Tricolore: Recipes in Green, White and Red by acclaimed chef and restaurateur Jacob Kenedy is a brilliant celebration of this much-loved staple.

Inspired by the colours of the Italian flag, this beautifully presented cookbook takes readers on a delicious journey through three chapters: Green, White and Red. Each section explores classic pasta combinations before showcasing creative variations, giving you plenty of inspiration to cook familiar favourites and discover something new.

Written with Kenedy's trademark wit and packed with practical know-how, the book also includes an appendix exploring different pasta shapes, making it an inspiring reference for both enthusiastic home cooks and serious food lovers.

For your chance to win, enter online or send an email titled 'Pasta Tricolore' along with your name, contact details and name of your Country Range Group wholesaler to **competitions@stiritupmagazine.co.uk**

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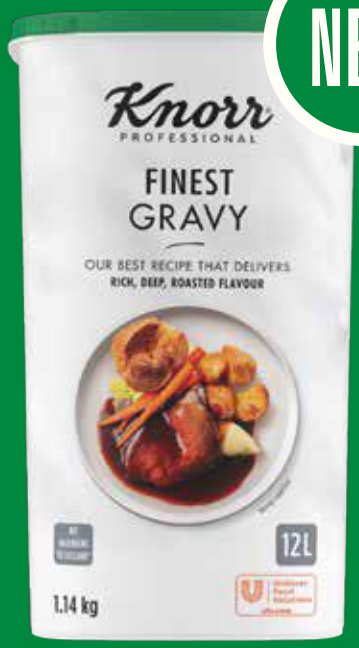
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