

Good Food - Great Produce



[FOOD & DRINK





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Good food starts with great produce, which is why Scotland has become renowned as one of the finest larders in the world.

Nature has endowed us with fresh air and clean water in abundance along with some of the finest raw ingredients, from seafood to cereal crops, and from venison and beef to raspberries bursting with flavour and packed with nutrients.

This bucolic vision has become an economic powerhouse, worth an annual £10bn, and the value of the Scottish food and drinks brands is growing fast, increasing by £28m across the UK in the last year alone.

In June, it was given a further boost when Rural Affairs Secretary, Richard Lochhead, announced a £1.1m funding package that aims to increase turnover still further to £12.5m by 2017.

The investment will be made through Scotland Food & Drink, which was established in 2007 to help support companies of all sizes increase their profitability and gain access to new markets.

Maggie McGinlay, Director of Food and Drink at Scottish Enterprise said: This sector is of huge importance to the economy and has demonstrated strong growth in turnover and GVA. It now employs five per cent of Scotland's workforce, with exports reaching a record £4.5bn in 2010."

Amongst those businesses leading the way is the Scotch whisky industry.

New distilleries are opening, redundant stills are being brought out of mothballs and, on Speyside, Diageo has announced plans to redevelop its Dailuaine Distillery complex, at a cost of £9.5m.

This follows on closely from the opening of Diageo's £40m Roseisle Distillery at Elgin last year and the company's Malt Distilling Director, Brian Higgs, said: "Scotch Whisky has never been more popular around the world."

There is optimism too at the other end of the scale, where small-scale producers of craft products are discovering a direct

route to customers through farmers markets and food shows.

One of these events is Gardening Scotland, the national flower and gardening show. Show Manager, Jim Jermyn has monitored the produce area closely since Gardening Scotland was established 12 years ago and he said: "There is no doubt that the Food Fayre is a growth area within the Show and the fact that we continue to attract new Scottish exhibitors shows the popularity of local produce and farm foods in Scotland."

Amongst the regular exhibitors at the event is The Handmade Oatcake Company, which was set up by Chris Young five years ago. His multi-award winning products, made from Banffshire oats, began life following a request from a customer at his deli in Crieff for a sweet version of the traditional biscuit.

Savoury versions soon followed and very quickly the popularity of the oatcakes was such that Chris sold the deli and had turned an old cowshed close to his home into a professional kitchen. Now he turns out 60,000 handmade oatcakes every week and a market exists for many more. "At the moment I have two major distributors waiting to take on the brand," he said.

Demand is growing too for Laura's Chocolates, which are made by hand in Kinross. The company's founder, Laura Cuthbert said: "In my first year I supplied 45 shops. Now the brand is stocked in more than 100 and I have just taken on seasonal staff. Even in the current climate customers are still willing to spend money on a high quality product and I am very optimistic about what the future holds."



Scottish Food and Drink Facts



Whisky

The Scotch whisky industry is one of the country's biggest earners, contributing vastly to Scotland's multi-billion pound food and drink exports. It is arguably Scotland's most famous worldwide export with 1.135 billion bottles exported in 2007 at a value of around £2.8bn. The halo effect of Scotch whisky cannot be underestimated as the product is synonymous with provenance and quality.

Water

Home to some of the UK's biggest bottled water brands, Scotland was the best performing region in the UK for bottled water sales in 2007. Scottish companies account for almost 20 per cent of the total UK bottled water market (excluding own-label), producing up to 245 million litres of bottled water every year. Research shows half of UK consumers believe Scotland produces the purest bottled water.

Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb

Both Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb have the coveted Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status – a European quality mark only awarded by the European Union when there is a clear link between the superior quality of a product and the environment in which it is produced. Scotch Beef contributes 26 per cent of the UK's total beef herd.

Pork

Scottish pigs produce some of the finest bacon in the world and Scotland has about 8 per cent of the UK pig herd (source: Quality Meat Scotland). Ayrshire bacon is probably the most famous but the north-east of Scotland is actually the stronghold for pig farms, with two thirds of the breeding stock situated here (source: Quality Meat Scotland).

Salmon

In 2007, Scotland exported more than 12 million salmon to 60 countries worldwide. Within the UK a million fresh salmon meals are eaten every day (source: Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation). It is responsible for a large proportion of Scotland's booming £400m aquaculture industry.



Seafood

Scotland's 5,000 fishermen and 2,375 fishing vessels land nearly 70 per cent of the UK's total seafood catch – more than 444,000 tonnes every year worth more than £370m. As well as world class mackerel and haddock, Scotland also catches the world's largest share of langoustines (source: Seafood Scotland) and it is one of the most valuable seafood species landed in Scottish waters. Worth £90m to the industry, langoustines are considered a delicacy and exported worldwide – few people realise that most of the langoustines eaten in Spain and France are from Scotland.

Venison

Scottish venison is considered some of the finest in the world. It is enjoying a culinary renaissance due to a surge in the number of farms in Scotland. The venison industry makes a valuable contribution to the Scottish economy and it is served in the UK's finest restaurants.

Strawberries/Raspberries

The main berry growing areas are Tayside, Grampian, the Highlands, Arran, Ayrshire and the Borders. Sales

of Scottish strawberries more than double in season (from early June). They contribute 40 per cent of the UK's annual crop and are worth at least £8.9m to the Scottish economy. Raspberries were first grown commercially in Scotland at the beginning of the 20th century. They are part of the booming Scottish soft fruit industry, the value of which has risen in the last decade from £11.9m in 1990 to £14.8m in 2000 (source: Input-Output Tables 2000).

Shortbread

Shortbread is synonymous with Scotland and is among the country's most valuable exports. It boasts the highest percentage of exports in the UK biscuit industry and goes to more than 80 markets worldwide.

Dairy

The dairy industry is a vital component of Scotland's economy, contributing around five per cent to the country's food and drink GVA and around 13 per cent of its total agricultural output.

Data from Scotland Food and Drink