

Letter from Morzine



Berits & Brown franchisee JOHN KANE says the deli is gradually finding friends among the local community

Morzine is just coming to life ahead of the winter ski season. By the time you read this we should be in full swing and the tills will be ringing. From now until April is a key time for the business – we need to pull the money in and it will be a case of long 12-hour days.

We've learned a lot since our last busy period. Back then, we hadn't worked out when the shop would be busy, so we ended up with too many staff during quiet periods. Through the winter, we expect a rush between 8-10am when people get up to go to the ski slopes and then from 4-8pm when they come back.

It is all weather dependent. If it's really bad we will be swamped all day because there's not much else to do apart from ski. We have taken on four new

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staff and have a couple of others who we can call on at short notice. We're hoping to build up a pool of people we can rely on from season to season.

Last week we held our first wine tasting, which went really well. We had 10 guests paying €30 a head to try eight different wines with food. Joanne, my wife, made finger food and tapas, and the wines were New World, Italian and Spanish. We made around €150, but it's more about developing community relations and getting exposure for the wines. We've already had lots of orders for the Prosecco we tried on the night ahead of Christmas.

We're also thinking of hosting induction dinners for new residents who have recently moved to the area. We would invite a few people that have lived in the area for a while to make newcomers feel welcome and to help answer questions like where to get your car serviced or how to enrol kids in French schools.

We're also keen to build a core base of French regulars. We have around two dozen at the moment, but we want to be a shop for everyone. The tourist trade is important, but local French residents will keep us ticking over between seasons.

It's taken longer to integrate with the local community than we expected, mainly because we're either at the shop or at home doing work related to the shop. We are making progress though. We've been invited to a meeting of local businesses at the maire's (mayor's) office about trading during the winter season. We also exhibit work from local artists in the shop and have had a lot of people coming in to see the work who end up stopping for a chat.

Interview by PATRICK McGUIGAN

news

regional round-up

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HEART OF ENGLAND

● From this month, independent retail members of Heart of England Fine Foods can use its Food and Drink Insights service, which provides tailored market intelligence reports covering product category information, retail trends and shopper insights. The service was initially aimed mainly towards small and medium sized producers. “It's been a tough year and with supermarkets moving more into smaller store



formats, independents are increasingly looking for market information to hone and differentiate their product ranges,” said Louise Pickford (left), business development manager.

● HEFF has also extended its Hygiene and Food Safety Standard to retailers. The retail version is comprised of guidance notes and audit checklists for shop hygiene, housekeeping and food safety requirements. These cover areas such as premises, staff hygiene and food preparation.

● The Savour the Flavour scheme has been extended to pubs and bars. Landlords will receive Savour the Flavour branded glasses, T-shirts and beer mats in return for adding six or more HEFF producers to their supplier list.

WALES

● Loraine Makowski-Heaton, founder of goats' cheese company Kid Me Not, was named joint winner of the Woman Farmer of the Year Award at the Royal Welsh Winter Fair last month. The NFU Cymru and Natwest Wales sponsored award was shared with Daphne Tilley, the driving force behind Elwy Valley Welsh lamb.

SOUTH-WEST

● Quickest Extra Mature Cheddar was named Champion Product at the Taste of the West Awards 2009 last month. Darts Farm scooped the Local Retail Outlet of the Year award, while Producer of the Year was David Baker of Styles Farmhouse Ice Cream.

● Over 40 local food and drink producers will be showcasing their goods at the free Love the Flavour Festival at Buckland Abbey in Devon (right) on Wednesday



dairrenharvey/dreamstime.com

February 17. The event is organised by Food & Drink Devon and the National Trust, which owns Buckland Abbey.

● Marshfield Bakery will sponsor the Bath Coffee Festival on May 15-16. Around 100 exhibitors will take stands in the city centre during the event, while other venues around the city will host coffee related activities, such as barista sessions, roasting master classes, latte art demonstrations and educational talks, films and music from coffee growing regions.

EAST MIDLANDS



● Online sales at Nottingham pie company Lime Tree Pantry have leapt from around £330 per week to more than £2,330 following a redesign of its website funded by a Food and Drink iNet grant from the East Midlands Development Agency.

YORKSHIRE & HUMBER

● Absolutely Food, a Yorkshire-based food PR and marketing firm, has launched a mystery shopping service for the pub, hotel and restaurant trade. The company will visit outlets anonymously and provide the owner with a written report on customer service and food standards.

● Farm shops in Yorkshire consistently beat local supermarkets on price when it comes to fresh produce such as meat, eggs and vegetables, according to research commissioned by the Regional Food Group (RFG) for Yorkshire and Humber.

The research, conducted over a three month period, compared items from 20 Yorkshire farm shops with supermarkets in the region, including Tesco, Sainsbury's and online retailer Ocado.

The results found that farm shops were an average of 12% cheaper than supermarkets on meat products, including minced beef (11% cheaper), braising steak (5% cheaper) and bacon (20% cheaper). They were also 16% cheaper on eggs, 24% cheaper on baking potatoes and 18% cheaper on leeks.

Victoria Robertshaw, co-owner of Keelham Hall Farm Shop in Bradford, which took part in the survey, said: “We regularly do our own random basket shop comparisons, where we are consistently over 20% cheaper than supermarkets.”