

FOR THE MODERN ON-TRADE
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MARCH 2025
ISSUE 236
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PUB & BAR

COVER: STEPS TO SUCCESS

How The Beckford Group instills ultimate hospitality

NATIONAL BURGER AWARDS

All that happened at this year's final showdown

PREPPING FOR SUMMER

Three key features ahead of the warmer months



**THE CHURCH
INN**

Mobberley, Cheshire
PUB OF THE YEAR

2016



**THE
BOTANIST**

Sheffield, South Yorkshire
PUB OF THE YEAR

2017



**THE WHITE
HORSE**

Chilgrove, West Sussex
PUB OF THE YEAR

2018



**THE CHURCH
INN**

Mobberley, Cheshire
PUB OF THE YEAR

2019



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GREEN MAN**
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PUB OF THE YEAR
2021



**THE
FROGMILL**
Shipton Oliffe, Gloucestershire
PUB OF THE YEAR
2022



**THE RUNNING
HORSES**
Mickleham, Surrey
PUB OF THE YEAR
2023



**THE GEORGE
INN**
Norton St Philip, Somerset
PUB OF THE YEAR
2024



LAST CHANCE TO ENTER



Tyrrell's
hand-cooked English crisps

**THE NATIONAL
&
PUB & BAR
AWARDS 2025**



Fleet Street.





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WELCOME



A NEW TRAINING REGIME

The whole 'seeing hospitality as a career' debate is as old as the industry itself. You're reading this magazine, which tells me you're more than aware of the vast opportunities pubs, bars, restaurants and hotels can bring to individuals, and yet, the mission to sell such a message to potential recruits is often perceived as impossible. So, what more can be done?

"THE 64-PAGE WAITER'S HANDBOOK KNOCKED MY SOCKS OFF"

Last month, I witnessed two training-specific initiatives – one nationwide, one local to a multiple operator – that filled me with hope. First, on a broader scale, the Department for Work and Pensions announced it will partner with trade body UKHospitality to roll out hospitality Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) to 26 new areas in need of jobs, meaning more skilled workers for pubs and bars. Hopefully this will transfer into a switch of perception too. The hospitality SWAP delivers bespoke training to people looking for work. It trains them with relevant skills, provides a work placement and a guaranteed interview, helping participants be as job-ready as possible.

Next, while interviewing the three directors of The Beckford Group (page 22), I was privy to the impressively detailed and bespoke training resources that they give to their team before anyone can even work a shift at any of their pubs. While elements such as the 'Front of House Ten Commandments' and a cartoon illustration of 'The Guest Journey' caught my eye, it was the 64-page Waiter's Handbook that knocked my socks off. I know what you're thinking: "Over 60 pages of instructions on how to be a waiter? Way to suck the life out of it!" But, I assure you, this manual has been created with heart, passion and conviction, laid out in a smart, captivating and contemporary way. I've got my hands on edition number four, meaning these guys are updating it as they go as well.

With wholesale changes being made on training and recruitment at a government level, alongside the energy and desire to create career longevity from businesses like The Beckford Group, perhaps more operators will have a look at modern approaches to recruitment and retention. I know it's March, but it's not too late to kick off that New Year's training regime.

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BROOKLYN PILSNER



— OFFICIAL BEER OF THE —
NATIONAL BURGER AWARDS 2025

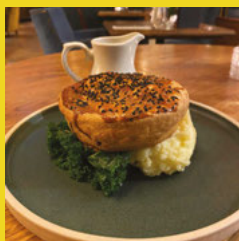
& MARCH 2025

**THIS MONTH,
THE PUB &
BAR TEAM
HAVE
ENJOYED
VISITING:**



THE BATH ARMS
Longleat, Wiltshire

THE MERRY HARRIERS
Godalming, Surrey



THE WINDMILL
Clapham, London

THE WHITE HORSE
Dorking, Surrey



BELL & CROWN
Zeals, Wiltshire

DOCKER BAR
Sandgate, Kent

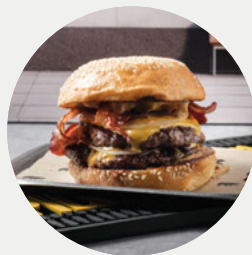
THREE SHEETS
Dalston, London



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Dan Brod, Charlie Luxton
and Matt Greenlees of The
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NATIONAL BURGER AWARDS

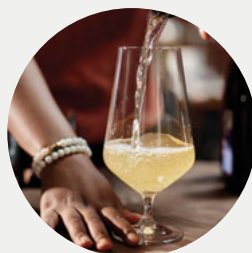
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Planning for spring is done,
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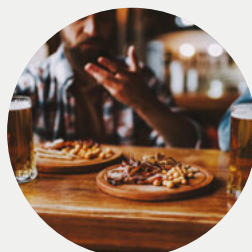
How a thirst for classics is
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NOW THE NEWS

SWINGERS SAYS FAREWELL TO ORIGINAL VENUE

Following nearly nine years of trading, crazy golf brand Swingers will close its original City of London location on Saturday 22 March 2025.

The closure comes as part of the planned redevelopment of the site, with the landlord set to demolish the entire block, Swingers told Pub & Bar.

Launched in 2016, Swingers City was the company's first permanent site following the success of the Swingers' pop-up in Shoreditch.

"Swingers City was where it all started," says co-founder and co-CEO Matt Grech-Smith. "When we first signed the lease, we had no idea how much this venue would shape not only our business but the wider competitive socialising scene.

"At the time, the concept of combining crazy golf with high-quality food and drink in an immersive setting was virtually unheard of. Swingers City helped pave the way for an entire industry, inspiring a new era of social entertainment."



PUBS AND BARS HOPE FOR EUROS LICENSING EXTENSION

The Home Office is proposing a relaxation of licensing hours during the UEFA Women's Euro 2025 tournament, should either Wales or England reach the semi-final and/or final.

The consultation (which lasts until 23 March) proposes to extend the licensing hours for the sale of alcohol on the premises only from 11pm to 1am in England and Wales.

For any games taking place on a Sunday, including the final, this will be of significant importance, as many venues are only licensed until 10.30pm on that day of the week.

"We wholeheartedly support the proposal to extend licensing hours for the Women's Euros this summer, which would be beneficial for both the hospitality sector and fans alike," says Kate Nicholls, chief executive of UKHospitality. "The previous success of the Lionesses has ignited passion for the team across the country, and extending pub hours will allow fans to celebrate together, deliver a welcome boost to businesses and solve any issues presented by the tournament taking place one hour ahead in Switzerland."



LAST CHANCE TO ENTER THE NATIONAL PUB & BAR AWARDS

Pub and bar operators have just weeks left to enter the 2025 National Pub & Bar Awards, with entries closing on Friday 21 March.

The event, which crowns 94 County Winners from across the whole of the UK, has expanded for this year, offering Highly Commended titles to multiple sites in each county, meaning many more accolades and places at the grand final.

At the awards ceremony at Big Penny Social in London on 24 June, the inaugural Top 10 Pubs & Bars in the UK list will also be unveiled, determined by votes from across the on-trade.

To enter your venue, visit nationalpubandbarawards.co.uk



**FOR ALL THE LATEST
BREAKING NEWS, VISIT
PUBANDBAR.COM**



(L-R) ADAM SYMONDS, JAY STYLER AND ROB TECWYN

THE BARING DUO TO OPEN SECOND PUB

Rob Tecwyn and Adam Symonds, the duo behind The Baring in Islington, are set to open their second pub, following the success of their debut business in north London.

The Kerfield Arms will open in Camberwell, south east London, taking over the former Crooked Well site. The venue is currently under refurbishment and should launch in April this year.

"If you are familiar with The Baring, expect the same style of cooking, decor and service but with the addition of a walk-in bar area for drinks and dining alongside a restaurant space and private dining room," the duo said via a post on Instagram.

"The kitchen will be led by Jay, our head chef at The Baring, and now a partner in the new venture, which he will run alongside Adam and Rob."



PROMOTED CONTENT

SALT: THE UNIVERSAL INGREDIENT

Simon James, Innovation Manager, Maldon Salt

At Maldon®, our salt is renowned for being loved by chefs the world over. Around the globe, chefs use our famous Sea Salt Flakes in a myriad of ways – seasoning, finishing, brining – in sweet and savoury dishes as well as behind the bar. Loyalty to Maldon® stretches far beyond the UK and the proof is in the pudding (pastry, pasta or preserves).

There's Thomas Keller, the chef behind the three-Michelin starred The French Laundry in California's Napa Valley, who's been a long-time exponent of Maldon® Salt, often infusing it with other ingredients such as lemon zest for the perfect finishing touch on a piece of salmon.

Milanese local Marco Pedron, who is Head Pastry Chef at the renowned restaurant Cracco in Milan's Galleria is unwavering in his approach to detail and quality – all reflected in his choice of ingredients. Using Maldon® Salt in breads, pastries and patisserie, his creations are famed for their beautiful presentation and perfectly balanced taste and flavour.

Previously named America's and the world's best bar, Caffè Dante in Manhattan is led by Australian bartender and Creative Director Naren Young who extols the virtues of Maldon® Salt not only on the rim of a drink, but as a key ingredient, to amplify citrus, temper sweetness and bind all other flavours together.

With a total of seven Michelin stars, Spanish chef Carme Ruscalleda i Serra has been at the top of the culinary world for three decades. Her innovative approach to cooking leads to real creativity – and she suggests sprinkling dried strawberries with Maldon® Sea Salt Flakes to enhance their flavour.

For more information, get in touch: info@maldonsalt.co.uk



PIANO WORKS DIRECTOR JOINS GREEK STREET LIVE

Tristan Moffat, formerly operations director of The Piano Works, has joined Greek Street Live, the live music venue in London's Soho.

Since joining, Moffat has led the complete transformation of 5 Greek Street, creating three new spaces in the historic three-storey townhouse.

Working alongside Dennis Rogers, founder of Gerry's Club Soho, and Dave Cribb and Lucy Penrose (the minds behind Overtures, London's first show tune sing-along bar), the foursome have split the venue into Greek Street Live on the ground floor, The Room Where It Happens on the first floor and Oscar's Den on the lower ground.

"We're building something truly special here," says Moffat, who left The Piano Works soon after its sale to nightlife operator Nightcap. "Greek Street Live and The Room Where It Happens are all about joy, connection and the power of music to bring people together, whether that's through a bespoke live music experience or a show-stopping sing-along. Soho has always been a place of creativity, and we're thrilled to add to its legacy."



JOSEPH HOLT SEES SURGE IN GEN Z GUESTS

Manchester-based brewery and pub operator Joseph Holt has reported it is seeing a change in demographics visiting its sites.

According to Joseph Holt, which owns 127 pubs across the north west, its pub managers are seeing a marked rise in 18- to 30-year-olds frequenting its pubs.

The operator believes the recent surge is driven by a love of nostalgia and appreciation of places with a warm, welcoming atmosphere, rather than venues "which feel impersonal".

The trend bucks the suggestion that Gen Z and younger guests shun going out for a drink as they pursue a more temperate approach to socialising.

"We are seeing more and more younger people coming into our pubs," says Mark Norbury, Joseph Holt's pubs director. "Not necessarily because they want to drink vast amounts, rather because this demographic is enjoying the whole pub experience in a way they haven't before."

When asked, they talk about loving the nostalgic feel of the venues – many of which are listed buildings with traditional fittings – as well as the experience of going out to the 'local'.



NORTH WEST SHIKO GROUP APPROACHES £10M TURNOVER

North west bar and kitchen operator Shiko Group is predicting its biggest year to date, projecting a turnover of £9.2m.

In what has been a fast period of growth for the Anthony Ellis-led outfit, predictions for its 2025/26 financial year forecast revenues to grow to £14m.

It has been six years since Shiko acquired its first venue, The Lawn Club in Manchester.

Since 2019, it has grown to eight venues across Manchester and Leeds, including Side Street (pictured), Courts Club, The Lawn Club, The Dome, The Stables and Foley's in Manchester, alongside its two Leeds locations Fearn's and The Canary.

"From the offset, [co-founder] Jonathan [Ware] and I have looked to create 'Unique Venues and Unforgettable Experiences', and much of the success is not only down to our fantastic collection of venues, but the hard work of our agile and adaptable team, without whom none of this would be possible," says Ellis. "The future's certainly very bright."

Shiko Group was born out of its sister company and events specialists WePop, and named after co-founder Ellis's late mother Yoshiko.

SPENDING AND DWELL TIME IN PUBS ON THE UP

New research has revealed encouraging data for pub and bar operators, showing a clear increase in both footfall and spend across the on-trade.

The latest Oxford Market Watch Snapshot shows footfall levels holding steady and dwell time increasing by 2.3%, reflecting a growing preference for longer, more immersive hospitality experiences.

Consumer spending also continues to rise, with card transactions up 2.6% in pubs, bars, clubs and restaurants, according to Barclays data. Oxford's own Market Watch reports a 4.3% rise in average spend per head on drinks and a 3.1% increase on food.

The standout story in terms of products is still the continued rise of stout, which has seen a 16.4% increase in sales.



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SUPPLIER NEWS

MR. PORKY TO SPONSOR GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL WINTER

The Great British Beer Festival Winter has revealed that Mr. Porky will be the glass sponsor of this year's event at the Magna Science Adventure Centre in Rotherham.

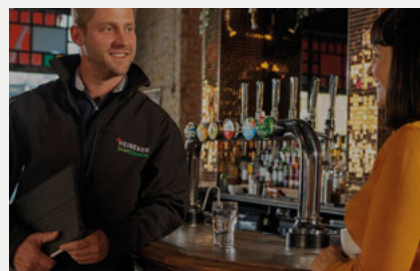
"Pork scratchings are the quintessential pub snack and the perfect partner to a pint, so we are really excited to sponsor [organiser] CAMRA in bringing the perfect pint to the nation," say the Mr. Porky's team.

This year, the historic former steelworks at the Magna Science Adventure Centre will host the Great British Beer Festival Winter 2025. mrporky.co.uk

REGALE OFFERS OPERATORS FREE DISPENSERS

Regale Microwaves, supplier of commercial microwaves and high-speed ovens, has launched an exclusive promotion to support professional kitchens in improving efficiency while reducing plastic waste.

From now until the end of March (while stocks last), customers who purchase a Panasonic NE-1880 or NE-3280 microwave or a NE-C1275 combination oven will receive three free Speedwrap Pro 300 Dispensers with cling film, foil and baking parchment. The Speedwrap Pro 300 is designed to eliminate unnecessary plastic waste. regale.co.uk



HEINEKEN UK TOPS DRINKS SUPPLIER POLL

Heineken UK has secured the number one spot among UK drinks suppliers to the UK on-trade, according to 2024's Advantage Report Voice of the Customer.

The brewer and pub company achieved the highest score of 65, with a score of 19 marking the average for the 26 participating suppliers.

Respondents in the 2024 Advantage Report Voice of the Customer programme included national pub groups such as Stonegate, Greene King, Fuller's and Admiral Taverns. According to its ratings, Heineken UK demonstrated impressive market leadership among a competitive group of 26 major beer, wine, spirit and soft drink suppliers. heineken.co.uk



TYRRELLS GIVES STAFFORDSHIRE PUB £5,000 OF CRISPS

The Tavern in Denstone, Staffordshire, has been announced as the winner of £5,000 worth of crisps from Tyrrells.

Marking the inaugural year of The League of Tyrrellbly Good Taste, the National Pub & Bar Awards headline sponsor entered all those who signed up to receive free display items into a prize draw, with the promise of thousands of pounds worth of crisps to the winner.

The League of Tyrrellbly Good Taste 2.0 will be revealed later this year. tyrrellscrisps.co.uk



SKY BUSINESS EXTENDS RACING TV PARTNERSHIP

Racecourse Media Group, parent company of horseracing channel Racing TV, has extended its partnership with Sky Business.

The deal means Sky Business will continue to be the exclusive provider of Racing TV for the hospitality sector, who will be able to show 8,000 live races per year.

Racing TV is the home of 90% of all Grade/Group 1 races, including Cheltenham, Aintree, Newmarket, Epsom, York, Goodwood and Sandown in the UK. business.sky.com



MKN AND JESTIC ANNOUNCE DISTRIBUTION DRIVE

MKN and Jestic Foodservice Solutions have launched MKN UK Distribution.

The new venture brings closer together the existing relationship between German commercial equipment manufacturer MKN and Jestic Foodservice Solutions to expand the MKN brand into a wider range of dealers and key accounts nationwide.

MKN UK Distribution will be dedicated to enhancing the on-going cooperation between the two businesses with a view to expanding and enhancing the MKN offer to dealers, consultants and specifiers nationwide. jestic.co.uk



In the mix

with middleton foods

In our latest industry insight series, 'In the Mix with Middleton Foods', our Business Development Chef, Justin Clarke, talks about catering for dietary requirements and the importance of making food allergies and intolerances such a vital consideration for chefs when planning their menus.

It's estimated two million people live with food allergies, intolerances or coeliac disease in the UK. Natasha's Law (which should be well-known throughout the industry) and Owen's Law – a campaign to make it a legal requirement for all UK restaurants and cafés to display allergy information on menus, which is pending formalisation – are life changing, and improve safety for those living with food hypersensitivity.

Creating an inclusive dining experience for everyone, no matter what their dietary requirements, ensures guests feel valued and, importantly, safe. Catering for dietary requirements isn't only about food safety and legal compliance, it's about understanding. It isn't simply about avoiding certain foods, it's about ensuring meals are balanced, nutritious and enjoyable – offering an enhanced dining experience with wonderful food, no matter what their needs. It's a crucial, often complex task, but

understanding the intricacies of dietary needs is key. Remember, food allergies and intolerances are often confused. They aren't the same. An allergy involves the immune system; an intolerance doesn't. Understanding the difference is key, and helps chefs plan meals which are safe and suitable for everyone. In fact, it shouldn't be a task – use it as an opportunity to carve a niche and make your food offer stand out from the competition. Fantastic food for all.

Acknowledging the individuals facing food allergies or dietary restrictions, can really help chefs create a more inclusive, more enjoyable dining experience; and ultimately make a positive difference in people's lives. Guests expect to see vegan, vegetarian and gluten free options on menus – not just as the odd item, either – but as a more comprehensive offering with a greater range of choices and culinary creativity. So, nurture culinary wizardry, use diverse and inclusive menu creation and careful ingredient substitution, to create dishes everyone can enjoy; regardless of their dietary restrictions.

We know food allergies and intolerances are at an all-time high – Coeliac UK estimate that around 1 in 100 people are affected by coeliac disease, but many other conditions including non-

coeliac gluten sensitivity also need a gluten free diet – which is why we invest heavily in our commitment to innovate NPD. Our new range of premium plus gluten free marinades has been carefully developed to meet the 2024 salt guidelines when used at recommended usage; and is certified as gluten free by Coeliac UK. Inspired by some of the world's most popular cuisines, the four flavours – Maple & Chilli, Mediterranean, Mexican and Shawarma – can be used to create an inspired menu of delicious dishes.

Working with a reputable supplier you can trust, like Middleton Foods, not only offers a variety of easy-to-use options – work with products that are designed to make life easier! – but also ensures the traceability and consistency of ingredients in high quality readymade food mixes. We support chefs by manufacturing products which give peace of mind that the ingredients they are using as part of their menu are suitable for customers with dietary needs. Menus don't need to lack taste and spark, we're designing products for chefs which can be used for special diets and be incorporated into day-to-day menus. Collaborate with us to ensure ingredient safety – we understand chefs' needs and offer reliability you can trust to forge dynamic menus that make mealtimes memorable.



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*...Or Neapolitan
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Luciano Vendone has been making dough and pizza bases at Deli Conti for many years and it is this recipe that has been behind many a thriving pizza business, whether a pub, deli, restaurant or street food operator.

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OPENINGS



IMAGE: PAUL WINCH-FURNESS

“IT HAS BEEN ON THE CARDS FOR OVER 10 YEARS, IT’S JUST BEEN A CASE OF WAITING FOR THE RIGHT SITE”

Scott Collins
MEATliquor founder

BLOODSPORTS

27-29 Endell Street, London, WC2H 9BA

London’s Covent Garden is home to the newest venue from the burger brand MEATliquor, with the business opening its first standalone bar in the former Circus site.

BLOODsports is inspired by the dive and sports bars of North America. With a late licence until 2am, the bar features over 30 screens that host live sports from across the globe day and night, as well as a catalogue of horror films in between.

It also offers guests karaoke, pool, pinball and arcade machines, as well as an Alfred Hitchcock-inspired photobooth called the ‘Psychobooth’.

The BLOODsports logo (an elephant giving the middle finger with its trunk) is inspired by the site’s history as a stables, where elephants performing at the nearby Royal Opera House were kept beneath the floors in the stables in the 1930s.

“BLOODsports has been on the cards for over 10 years, it’s just been a case of waiting for the right site,” says founder Scott Collins. “It’s inspired by the best of the dive and sports bars I frequented when I lived in the US, with a carefully curated dash of horror films and our rock solid MEATliquor food menu with some BLOODsports-specific dishes.”

Hideout Coffee & Donuts will also be available from 8am until 8pm, marking the Portsmouth-based business’ first foray outside of its home town.

RED LION

640 High Road, Leytonstone, Bushwood, London, E11 3AA

A Leytonstone pub that houses a 10-bedroom boutique hotel and grand ballroom has reopened, following a large investment from owner Urban Pubs & Bars.

The pub has undergone a £750,000 restoration programme, revitalising the 10-bedroom boutique hotel, grand ballroom, and transforming the pub and its beer garden.

Steeped in history, the Red Lion has been a cornerstone of Leytonstone since 1870, with a pub existing on the site since 1670.



THE BRITANNIA

9 Millmead, Guildford, GU2 4BE

The people of Guildford have a newly refurbished pub to visit, following a £300,000 transformation of riverside site The Britannia.

Owned by Shepherd Neame, the pub on the banks of the River Wey has undergone three weeks of work to create a fresh new look for its customers. It reopened on 30 January in time for the Guinness Men’s Six Nations.

The Britannia has been fully redecorated inside, with refurbished seats, a new colour scheme of blues and greens, and new artwork on the walls.

HALL & WOODHOUSE CROWTHORNE

Fosters Lane, Crowthorne, RG45 6UF

Following eight months of construction and a £5m investment, pub operator Hall & Woodhouse has opened a new restaurant, café and bar in Crowthorne, Berkshire.

The new venue is a two-storey restaurant for up to 150 seated covers near Buckler’s Forest, a 102-hectare Forestry Commission site.

It will be overseen by Sian Grantham, the restaurant and bar’s new general manager, who brings over 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry from brands including Carluccio’s and Cosy Club.





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MANAGING RISKS ON YOUR PREMISES

LICENSING PARTNER AT LAW FIRM TLT EWEN MACGREGOR
REVIEWS HOW PUB AND BAR OWNERS AND MANAGERS CAN
EFFECTIVELY MANAGE RISK IN THEIR PREMISES

The day to day running of your premises requires you to identify and mitigate

various risks covering a wide range of legislation. This includes health and safety, fire safety and environmental protection.

GENERAL DUTY UNDER YOUR PREMISES LICENCE

In so far as your premises licence is concerned, as licence holder and/or DPS, your responsibility is not to eliminate every risk but to promote the licensing objectives. In short, identifying risks, establishing who may be harmed and mitigating against that harm will stand you in good stead should the worst happen. There are a number of simple steps that you may want to consider as good practice:

PREVENTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER

If CCTV has been installed consider checking whether it's in full working order? How often is this checked? Are dates and times stamped on the recordings? Do appropriate members of staff have access to the hard drive to be able to download CCTV where asked?

Are any policies relating to prevention of crime and disorder up to date (drugs, requirement for door supervisors, etc)?

Safeguarding of staff and customers is a serious issue that has become something of a touchstone for good operating practices. Have you adopted schemes such as Ask for Angela/Ask for Clive, or other measures to keep everyone safe?

PREVENTION OF PUBLIC NUISANCE

Where risk is identified, usually relating to music, garden use or dispersal at closing time, is there a robust policy in place that staff are trained in?

PUBLIC SAFETY

Often these are covered by other legislation but are relevant to good operation of your premises. Regular checks of fire alarm systems, fire escape

routes, signage and decent opening and closing checks are essential processes for any premises.



PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM HARM

Policies such as 'Challenge 25', restricting hours children can be on the premises and/or restricting access during particular events are all sensible measures to mitigate risks to children on site.

SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

Your premises licence will likely have conditions on it (outside of the mandatory conditions) that require some measures to be taken in relation to specific risks. Breach of a condition runs the risk of regulatory enforcement action and the possibility of a licence review or even prosecution in serious cases, so ensuring compliance is a critical part of managing risk. If you think a specific condition is an unfair burden or unnecessary, then rather than ignoring it, speak to the council about removing or amending the condition. This can often be achieved with a minor variation.

TRAINING/REVIEWS

It is important that all relevant staff are fully trained in the policies that you have in place, not only insofar as the licensing objectives are concerned but your broader responsibilities to staff and customers. Policies should be regularly reviewed and if needed updated to ensure that they conform to best practice and changing circumstances. Likewise, records of staff training – and refresher training – should be signed, dated and available for inspection.

CONCLUSION

Mitigating risks is an essential tool for effective management. Customers may not see the work that goes into this, but it is often reflected in their repeat custom – no-one likes feeling unsafe! The time invested in these measures, when done properly, pays dividends in reputation for being a great place to go. 🍷

Q&A

Q. I want to use AI to help promote my venue – are there any risks I should be aware of?

A. Like mixing the perfect cocktail, you need to get the legal mix right: a shot of data privacy (full GDPR compliant proof); two dashes of data security; a twist of intellectual property awareness (to avoid nasty copyright hangovers); and a garnish of regular updates (to stay on top of the wave of new AI-specific regulations coming into place).

Q. A new entitlement to neonatal care leave and pay is coming into force in April – what do I need to know?

A. From 6 April 2025, parents of babies needing neonatal care may be eligible for up to 12 weeks' statutory neonatal care leave. Statutory neonatal care pay will be available at the statutory prescribed rate or 90% earnings for those meeting service and earnings criteria. Employers should update their policies, provide manager training and inform employees about the changes before April 2025.



TLT is a full service commercial law firm offering licensing, real estate, regulatory, employment, commercial and other legal services. We offer comprehensive advice to businesses in the leisure, food and drink sectors, including pubs, bars, nightclubs and their suppliers. This publication is intended for general guidance and represents our understanding of the relevant law and practice at the time of writing. Specific advice should be sought for specific cases. Please do get in touch with any questions: www.tlt.com



MOVING TO A CHEAPER, GREENER ENERGY SYSTEM

A RECENT POLL¹ OF SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS SHOWED THAT NEARLY TWO THIRDS² THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO REDUCE THEIR BUSINESS'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

When it comes to running a business, even making small changes and improvements can make a big difference, whether it's saving money, being good for the planet or both.

From the research, seven in ten owners³ agreed we all need to do our best to tackle climate change now, with 58% saying energy efficiency is at the forefront of their decision-making when buying new equipment or appliances. Additionally, 56% say being a sustainable business is increasingly important to their customers, with two thirds⁴ agreeing it is important to share environmental policies and best practice with staff.

With running costs remaining a concern for many small business owners, 65% say better managing their energy usage and costs is a priority this year. One small step small business owners can take to help with this is to get a smart meter installed.

Smart meters have lots of benefits for small businesses to help them to manage their energy usage and costs. By helping them to take steps to be more efficient with their energy use, smart meters can also have a positive effect on a business's carbon footprint.

As well as helping to give you more control of your business budgeting, smart meters play an important role in Great Britain's energy infrastructure upgrade, as we continue to increase our use of cheaper, greener renewable energy sources.

The data smart meters provide is key to this innovation, and will enable us to buy, store and consume energy differently to the way we do today, gathering the information the energy networks need that will help the energy system better manage supply and demand.

This will make the whole system more efficient and able to use more renewables such as wind and solar power.

So just by having a smart meter installed, you're helping to create a smarter, greener energy system that will benefit Britain, the planet - and you.

Whether you own or rent your business premises, you may be eligible for a smart meter, and if you are renting, but pay your own energy bills, you can ask your supplier to install one*.

Smart meters are currently available, and installations are happening now.

To find out if your business is eligible, contact your energy supplier or broker; search "Get a smart meter for business" or visit smartenergyGB.org.

SMART METER BENEFITS

ACCURATE BILLING

Smart meters measure energy usage in near real-time, so no more manual readings or estimated bills. This means you only pay for the energy you use, which can help with managing cashflow.

CONTROL

The data provided by smart meters can give you more control over your business' energy spend, helping you monitor energy usage and identify where cost savings can be made.

ACCESS TO HISTORIC ENERGY USAGE DATA

Small businesses with a smart meter can request free access to 12 months of data from their energy supplier. This could help with budgeting and reduce bill shock. It could also help you plan for your next bill by identifying any trends or patterns in your energy use across the year.

Smart meters give you access to free and regular information on your energy use. Your energy supplier may provide this via an online platform, app, smart meter display or other data tools.



¹500 microbusiness owners and decision makers in England, Scotland and Wales, Censuswide, January 2025. ²63% - 500 microbusiness owners and decision makers in England, Scotland and Wales, Censuswide, January 2025. ³71% - 500 microbusiness owners and decision makers in England, Scotland and Wales, Censuswide, January 2025. ⁴67% - 500 microbusiness owners and decision makers in England, Scotland and Wales, Censuswide, January 2025. *Eligibility may vary. Contact your energy supplier or broker to check eligibility. If you rent your business premises, you may need to check with your landlord that any changes to the meter are allowed within the rental contract.

THE MONTHLY SPORT

PUB & BAR TAKES A LOOK AT THE BIG SPORTING EVENTS THAT PUBS CAN UTILISE OVER THE NEXT MONTH



ONE TO WATCH

THE FA CUP AND CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

QUARTER AND SEMI FINAL STAGES

FROM 8 APRIL, BBC, ITV AND TNT SPORTS

Ah, the magic of... the cup! Whether it's league, FA or European, there really isn't anything else quite like the final knockout stages of a high-profile football competition (to football fans, anyway).

Following the quarter finals of the FA Cup at the end of this month, April brings a flurry of fixtures both domestically and across Europe. From 8 April, the Champions League returns with its quarter final stages, with the first legs taking place on 8 and 9 April, and the second legs on 15 and 16 April. From a home turf perspective, your guests will be closely following the prospects of Liverpool, Arsenal and Aston Villa, should they progress through the round of 16 against PSG, PSV and Club Brugge respectively.

When it comes to the FA Cup, pub and bar operators should mark the weekend of 26 April in their diaries, as that's when the two semi finals will be played out. Of course, right now it's anyone's guess as to which four teams will feature, but you can rest assured that plenty of people will be ready to witness which two make it to Wembley.

PREMIER LEAGUE

SOME DATES, TIMES AND BROADCASTERS TO BE CONFIRMED



Arsenal v Fulham

Tuesday 1 April, 7.45pm

Next month begins with a host of Premier League games under the lights. This London derby will be a key fixture.



Chelsea v Spurs

Wednesday 2 April, 7.45pm

Chelsea will still be aiming for a top four finish this season, but how Spurs would like to dent those ambitions.



Liverpool v Everton

Wednesday 2 April, 8pm

This has to be the pick of the mid-week bunch, as Liverpool look for revenge following the 2-2 thriller last month.



Man United v Man City

Weekend of 5 April

This campaign hasn't gone to plan for either of the Manchester clubs. Even so, a Manchester derby is never dull.

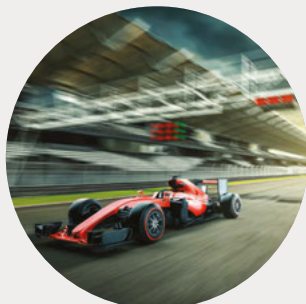
MORE TO SEE



HORSE RACING THE GRAND NATIONAL

5 April, ITV

For a moment, millions are keen on horse racing, as the world-famous event returns. Read more on page 36.



FORMULA 1 JAPANESE GRAND PRIX

6 April, Sky Sports

It will be early days in the new season, but April has a three fast and furious F1 races from Japan, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.



SNOOKER WORLD SNOOKER CHAMPIONSHIP

19 April-5 May, BBC

The snooker may not deliver the liveliest of atmospheres in venues, but it can mean leisurely pub visits and increased dwell time.



ATHLETICS LONDON MARATHON

27 April, BBC

The London Marathon is the perfect background coverage to have on during the day, as thousands will have a vested interest.

RUGBY

GUINNESS WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS

22 MARCH-26 APRIL, BBC

Much like the rise in popularity of women's football, the game of rugby continues to grow in audience numbers, with the 2025 Guinness Women's Six Nations forming part of a larger narrative for the women's game.

Following record-breaking audience engagement in 2024, the organisers say that focus remains on accessibility and exposure, with global live broadcasts and significant digital outreach, meaning there are plenty of opportunities for pubs and bars to screen more international rugby games after the men's tournament concludes.

"The 2024 women's championship underscored its significance at the heart of international rugby, with audience growth that included a 22% rise in matchday attendance, and a total global live audience of 16.2m fans tuning in to watch (a 9% increase on the previous year)," say the organisers. What's more, the official website states that positive signs of increased fan engagement were seen in the 52% increase in participants in the women's fantasy rugby game, and 32,000 votes for the Player of the Championship award (a 140% increase on the previous year's votes).

Fans will be able to watch every minute of the action from every game, thanks to worldwide live broadcast coverage, which includes the BBC in the UK, so operators who are thinking of tapping into the W6N really have no excuse not to give it a go.





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THE BECKFORD GROUP, A SIX-STRONG OUTFIT IN WILTSHIRE AND SOMERSET, HAS QUIETLY BUILT A PREMIUM OPERATION ADMIRIED BY THOUSANDS. WE SIT DOWN WITH THE THREE DIRECTORS TO DISCOVER THE HOWS AND WHYS

WORDS: TRISTAN O'HANA





THE ART *AND HEART* OF HOSPITALITY

In the previous issue of Pub & Bar, you may have read a tale about my time in Wiltshire just after the Christmas period, where I visited the rather wonderful Grosvenor Arms in Hindon (not read it? Fear not – it’s available at pubandbar.com). During my time there, I popped up the road to drop in at – what some would say is – a bit of a legendary pub, particularly within the area.

While ordering a couple of Bloody Marys at The Beckford Arms, my wife and I overheard two gentlemen at the bar discussing in detail how Guinness shortages over the Christmas period may have affected the industry. It was obvious they were ‘in the trade’ and, after offering my opinion on the matter, I soon discovered I was chatting to Charlie Luxton, co-owner of not just The Beckford Arms, but its parent company The Beckford Group. He generously paid for our drinks and we agreed to catch up soon and have a proper talk about the industry and, of course, his business.

Well, in this game, things move fast, and it wasn’t long before I was back in Wiltshire, this time at The Bath Arms in Longleat, sat in its PDR/shooting room in front of Luxton and his two business

partners Dan Brod, co-founder of The Beckford Group in 2009, and Matt Greenlees, who joined the business from Babington House in 2013. I’m a longtime admirer of this group, but this is the first time I’ve had the chance to talk to the trio who run it and delve a little deeper into the nuts and bolts that keep the cogs turning in such an admirable fashion. Prior to the meet, I could find nothing on how a seemingly successful and premium business was doing financially, so let’s dive right in.

“THESE BASIC SKILLS WILL BE USED FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES”

“Year-on-year, we’re up,” says Brod. “But as we know, the cost of everything has gone through the roof, so turning the top-end sales into bottom-line profits is harder. Turnover has increased, but that’s because we’ve risen our prices slowly. We don’t like to share numbers about each of the pubs, but as a group we’re turning over more than £10m.”

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

For those not familiar with The Beckford Group, currently the estate is made up of The Beckford Arms, The Bath Arms, The Talbot Inn (Mells), The Lord Poulett Arms (Hinton Saint George), and The Beckford Bottle Shop and The Beckford Canteen, both of which are in Bath. A side-arm to the business is the bath and body product brand Bramley, founded by Chloë Luxton, who originally created the range for the group’s first site The Beckford Arms. As you probably know, Bramley has done quite well ever since.

As has The Beckford Group as a whole, really. Despite being made up of just six venues, these guys have built a reputation as one of the best operators in the pubs with rooms business, creating destination sites that guarantee a premium pub experience without pretention, alongside a boutique style of aesthetic and service akin to the early days of the Soho House group. This comparison is common, as not only did Greenlees spend seven years at Nick Jones’ Babington House (part of the Soho House estate), but Luxton was the operations and property director there for a decade, helping create the members club brand that is well-regarded across the globe. ➤

"Matt and I grew up at Soho House together," says Luxton. "And that was where we learned all this, it was all gut feeling in those days. But we have brought it to here and adapted it to the pub environment. Soho House was its best when it was relatively small, as are most companies in hospitality."

"What's different with us is it still connects to the three of us," adds Brod. "I think when you become 100 sites or whatever, it doesn't really connect back to you. We always talk about our expansion, but we want to remain connected to our sites."

This was no more evident than in the early days of The Beckford Group, when the owners would still be working the floor, delivering the level of detail and hospitality that they set for themselves. Now, with hundreds of employees across their venues, they have had to find other ways of keeping those precise aspects of attention in play.

HAVE YOU DONE YOUR HOMEWORK?

During our interview, it doesn't take long before I am presented with a Beckford-emblazoned tote bag, which contains my "homework", I am told by Brod. He laughs, of course, as he hands me the bag, but sincerely suggests I have a good read through its content. Inside, there are four items to flick through at first, then get lost in later: Welcome to The World of Beckford; The Guest Journey; The Knowledge; and A Waiter's Handbook – The Art and Heart of Hospitality. The



"WE SPEND £3,000 A MONTH ON CANDLES ALONE"

latter, I kid you not, is arguably the most impressive team training 'manual' I've seen in all the years I've been doing this job. The detail, passion and genuine care written on every page is of such use to those who value true hospitality, that I'm a little surprised they've given me a copy to write about for you all. But, while they will obviously always focus on the success of their own business, these guys seem just as loyal to the industry as a whole.

"We've developed all these things which are a little bit unusual and might be interesting to your readers," says Brod. "Before anybody can work on our floor, they get A Waiter's Handbook, which is a thing we wrote on... how to be a waiter. Your 19- or 20-year-olds, an average member of staff, they don't know how to

be a waiter, right? They might not have been to as many places as we might have been to, learn what we've learned. So, they've got to read that book. Then each site has its own specific piece called The Knowledge, which is 100 questions they have to be able to answer about the pub and the area."

Again, maybe I've been asking the wrong questions for all these years, but I've never seen anything like this before. I'm given 'The Knowledge' on The Talbot Inn, which contains questions on the pub, its history, the food, the bedrooms, health and safety. What is Coppa? Who owns the Mells Estate? Why do we use rapeseed oil? How do you describe hospitality? It's detailed, it's bespoke and, crucially, it's evident in the Beckford people you encounter when visiting each site.

"It's pre-emptive training," says Brod. "It means that if you come onto one of our floors, you know a lot about what the guest might ask you. Then we've got a whole thing we've developed called The Guest Journey, about how you take customers through it. It's a whole suite of stuff that we're doing, as we want to be a nurturer of hospitality. It took a long time to develop our own DNA, and what we're trying to do as operators is to get our DNA into every single one of our staff."

"The big push for us in 2025 is the hospitality," adds Greenlees. "You have to make sure guests have a bloody good experience. Every day we're working with our teams – it could be a message sent from our training manager Dan, which last week was on first impressions. He



sends a message to management teams, and they then use that as a focus point to discuss hospitality among the groups. We call that communication Beckford Bites, where we will do 15-minute sessions before briefings, both lunch and dinner. It's about asking ourselves 'how can we be better than the next pub?'"

"It is really what we are about and staff reacting so positively to the information has a very immediate effect on the business," Luxton tells me the day after the interview takes place. "At the same time, seeing an inexperienced 18-year-old beginning to understand what hospitality is (rather than just service) is deeply rewarding to us personally. Without being too grandiose, these basic skills will be used for the rest of their lives and even while they are working with us, we see actual changes in their demeanour as they absorb and grow up, often over just a few months."

COSTS, DETAILS AND ADAPTATION

When you walk into any Beckford venue, it's ready for you. What do I mean? Well, I offer the guys an example of a recent pub visit closer to home where, 20 minutes after opening, candles and fires weren't lit, radiators were off, a table used for a team meeting wasn't cleared. It wasn't ready for service. I ask them why, in a world where first impressions and repeat custom is crucial for survival, many are still falling short?

"It's all about detail and care," says Luxton. "But those things are being compromised. Candles won't be lit, they would have had two waiters on two years ago, now they've got one, they leave the heating off to save a bit more money. It comes down to cost."

"We spend £3,000 a month on candles alone," adds Greenlees. "That's out of our pocket, but it creates the atmosphere we want for our pubs."

On the cautious topic of costs, despite their success, the trio know their business is just as vulnerable as the next, as pubs, bars and all of the hospitality industry approach increases in many areas of business come April. How does The Beckford Group mitigate against such daunting horizons?

"You either increase the price to the punter or you reduce the number of staff," says Luxton. "If you want to try and keep the punter coming in the door, you're very nervous about reducing the staff and very nervous about increasing

the price. So, we're doing a little bit of both. Ultimately, what's suffering is our bottom line, so we're taking a view at the moment that whatever we may have made has changed and we are the ones taking the hit."

"The fundamental metrics of the pub business have changed forever," adds Brod. "This is going to be the toughest financial year for this industry, tougher than Covid in my view. You have got to adapt. This year, some people are very sadly going to go out of business, but it's because they haven't adapted. You can't moan on about this. You've got to be optimistic, you've got to love what you do and you've just got to adapt and be nimble enough to go with it and not get stuck in your ways. We've seen this coming and we've been getting ready for it, so that's why I'm optimistic about us."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Brod's optimism hasn't just materialised from recent planning over upcoming changes, though. This is a business that's been running successfully since 2009. What's more, Beckford is self-funded, with its pub-by-pub profits allowing for its gradual expansion over the last 16 or so years. Self-assurance then is justified. But six venues in 16 years? One could argue that is rather slow growth for such a revered company.

"IT'S BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T ADAPTED. YOU CAN'T MOAN ON ABOUT THIS"

"Growth has been slow for us, because the pubs have got to be perfect," says Greenlees, referencing the spectacular locations of each one. "Trying to find a perfect pub is tough."

"What we're trying to do in all our sites is be a place for locals that is interesting enough and good enough to attract people from very far away," adds Brod. "That's how you get the numbers through the door. You have to mix those markets."

Despite its modest expansion over a decade and a half, The Beckford Group could actually reach 10 venues by this time next year. While its first hotel, Teffont House, was due to open in autumn 2023, "incredibly complicated planning permission" has pushed that into early 2026. Alongside that is the imminent



Corsham House – a 14-bedroom hotel featuring another Beckford Bottle Shop, a bistro and a Bramley Spa, which should open this winter. Then, perhaps less common knowledge is the plan to open two more pubs in the next three or four months in the surrounding area, one of which has an already established following and trade. Alas, that's all I'm allowed to share with you at this stage.

This would take them to a 10-strong business, something of a milestone. What happens then? Do they sell? Do they keep growing? Do they merge with another business?

"We are thinking about all that," says Brod. "I don't have much more to say on it, but we are thinking about it, as is everyone in our position. It's difficult to know what the optimum size is for an increasing head office function. A growing pain of all small groups is do you just stay small and beautifully formed, or do you grow? For us, the growth is for two reasons. One is genuinely to provide a route for our staff to grow and develop, so they can go and be a manager. And two, it's economies of scale. We've developed this tribe of 45,000 people on our database, and they like what we do, and they want to go to more of it. So it makes sense to give them that."

If they were ever to sell for the sake of growth, I ask, would it not risk the continuity of what they've already produced and achieved?

"100%," concludes Brod. "And that's why it's very unclear about what to do. It's a fiddly business, isn't it?" 🍷


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BLACK BEAR ROARS TO THE TOP



A NEW YEAR BRINGS A BRAND-NEW LINE-UP OF NATIONAL BURGER AWARDS WINNERS, AS THE ANNUAL COOK-OFF SHINES A LIGHT ON THE UK'S FINEST BURGERS



A WORTHY BUNCH OF WINNERS

At the 11th instalment of the National Burger Awards, the room was abuzz as the grills fired up, setting the stage for a full day of pro patty action. The date: Tuesday 11 February. The location: Big Penny Social in Walthamstow, London. The mission: to identify the National Burger of the Year 2025. Sixteen talented chefs were in the running to bag the coveted prize, but which was the proud purveyor of the of the nation's ultimate burger? There was only one way to find out.

Headline sponsored by Brooklyn Brewery, the event invited venues across the country to submit their signature recipes, with finalists selected from across the restaurant, pub and street food sectors. With everything teeing up to an epic competition, resident host Christian Stevenson (aka DJ BBQ) kicked things into gear, and the National Burger Awards 2025 were officially underway.

On top of National Burger of the Year, three sought-after titles were up for grabs: Burger Chef of the Year, Plant-



Aubrey Allen



Fleet Street.





NATIONAL Burger AWARDS

TWENTY TWENTY FIVE

Based Burger of the Year and the Bloggers' Choice Award. This year also saw the return of the popular Freakshake Challenge, with another incredible line-up bidding to impress a sweet-toothed judging panel.

The 2025 competitors featured an interesting mix of indie names, high street brands, returning finalists and even former winners. But who came out on top? Read on to find out...

The National Burger Awards 2025 were headline sponsored by Brooklyn Brewery and sponsored by Americana, Aubrey Allen, Conglom, Fleet Street, Four Roses Bourbon, Kerrymaid, Kühne, Oliehoorn, Pepsi, Redefine Meat, Synergy Grill Technology, Tabasco and Vitamix. ▶

THE 2025 FINALISTS

- **7bone, Southampton**
Prince Charles is Overrated
- **Albert's Schloss, National**
The Baron Burger
- **Andy's Burgers, London**
Double Andy's Classic
- **Black Bear Burger, London**
Miso Bacon Burger
- **Bun & Sum, London**
Big SMac
- **Burger & Lobster, London**
Beast Burger
- **El Perro Negro, Glasgow**
The Black Dog
- **Fat Hippo, National**
French Kiss
- **Lagom, London**
The Gothenburger
- **Loungers, National**
Diablo Smash Burger
- **Mollie's, Oxford**
New Yorker
- **Patty & Bun, London**
Patty Luger
- **Roddy Burger, Tunbridge Wells**
The Gazza
- **Smiths of Bourton, Cheltenham**
Mr P
- **The Boring Burger, Guildford**
The Boring Burger
- **The Butcher's Tap and Grill, Marlow**
Joe Marler



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NATIONAL BURGER OF THE YEAR

BLACK BEAR'S MISO BACON BURGER, NATIONAL BURGER OF THE YEAR

A burger brand with multiple sites across the capital scooped the top prize at this year's National Burger Awards, winning National Burger of the Year at the 11th annual competition.

Stewart Down of Black Bear Burger – which has sites in Exmouth Market, Brixton, Victoria, Canary Wharf, Shoreditch and Camden – wowed a panel of industry judges with his signature creation, seeing off competition from 15 other finalists.

Down's Miso Bacon Burger featured two 45-day aged beef patties, cheese, smoked bacon, miso butter mayo and onion, sandwiched between a bespoke sesame seed bun.

The win follows the chef-owner's success at the 10-year anniversary Champion of Champions event last September, where he was presented with the Bloggers' Choice Award.

"I was pretty surprised," says Down. "We've competed two times before – came third last year and won the Bloggers' Choice Award after that, but this was the one we wanted."

"We've been going for over seven years and this is recognition, as we've been so focused on doing burgers the best we possibly can. To come here and get something like this is pretty special. This changes things. We've seen the past winners, and they are big, impressive names. To be up there with the likes of them is amazing."

"THIS CHANGES THINGS"

Down describes the Miso Bacon Burger as the most paired-back option available on Black Bear's menu.

"For us, it's the purest burger on offer – the best quality ingredients cooked in the best possible way," he adds. "There's nothing to hide behind; it's essentially just a bacon cheeseburger with a bit of umami from the miso. The bun can be forgotten but it's also so important, and this one incorporates sesame seeds to produce that final flavour."

- **2nd place:** Roddy Burger, The Gazza
- **3rd place:** Smiths of Bourton, Mr P

So, what's next for Down and the Black Bear team? Well, no doubt this coveted award will provide a decent boost to business, as burger-lovers far and wide race to try this year's best-tasting burger. And the good news is that the group is about to launch a brand-new site at Paddington Market Halls, meaning these lip-smackingly good creations can be sampled all over the capital! 🍔



LEFT TO RIGHT: DJ BBQ WITH BLACK BEAR BURGER'S STEWART DOWN AND H2O PUBLISHING'S TRISTAN O'HANA



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"We were lucky enough to get to meet Synergy at the National Burger Awards Champion of Champions, we cooked on the griddle and knew this was the bit of kit that would give us the best crust on the patties and consistent heat. We haven't looked back."

- Sam Bryant
Chef/Co Founder of Whole Beast



NATIONAL BURGER CHEF OF THE YEAR



BACON AND CHEESE PICANTE, COOKED BY NICK WATKINS, NATIONAL BURGER CHEF OF THE YEAR

The competition also saw finalists participate in a Technical round, requiring them to make the ultimate burger from a selection of sponsor ingredients in a bid to be named National Chef of the Year.

This year's Technical winner was Nick Watkins of El Perro Negro, who impressed judges with his Bacon and Cheese Picante. Watkins is no stranger to the event, having claimed National Burger of the Year in 2019 and again in 2021.

Watkins' Technical winner featured Aubrey Allen's bespoke four-cut dry-

aged blend mince and pre-cooked Smoked Streaky Bacon, topped with Kerrymaid's Dairy Cheese Slices, Kühne's Burger Gherkins, soft white onions, an enriched marrow and rendered beef fat butter and a spicy house burger sauce made with Oliehoorn's mayonnaise and Tabasco, all sandwiched between an Americana brioche bun.

"We just tried to keep it simple," says Watkins. "Aubrey Allen's meat is really good, so we really just wanted to make the beef the star of the show. We did that and got the award, which is cracking.

"THINGS ARE HAPPENING OUTSIDE OF LONDON"

"I'm here quite a lot, but I don't ever seem to feel any less nervous," he adds. "There are so many good people here that are doing amazing things, so it's an absolute privilege not only to still be getting involved in this competition, but also still placing."

Watkins is currently the most successful participant in the history of the event. Though he sometimes lacks confidence in the run-up to the live cooking showdown, year after year he remains keen to be involved.

"It's a great thing for me, coming from Glasgow down to London and doing this kind of event. It's brilliant both from a PR and business perspective – things are happening outside of London and sometimes the press doesn't recognise that. But there is an awareness that's growing. I hope we're contributing to that to a certain extent.

"I'm just incredibly grateful for the opportunities and the recognition that we've had off the back of these awards, so I feel obliged to keep turning up." 🍔



LEFT TO RIGHT: DJ BBQ WITH NICK WATKINS AND H2O PUBLISHING'S TAMSYN HALM

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PLANT-BASED BURGER OF THE YEAR

Fat Hippo stole the show in the Plant-Based category, with chef Rob Macdonald's Sloppy Faux creation taking home the crown.

Macdonald's winning dish featured a Premium Burger Patty from Redefine Meat, topped with a plant-based 'sloppy faux' mix, Pickleback chipotle slaw and BBQ sauce, presented between an Americana Gourmet Burger Bun.

The chef says of his big win: "The Sloppy Faux is a vegan imitation of the Sloppy Joe, which everyone has heard of before, so we really wanted to push those flavours. Hopefully everyone liked it. I mean, clearly, enough did for us to win!"

It's a timely moment for the Fat Hippo brand, as the group looks towards a complete redesign of its vegan menu this year.

"With our increasing focus on the plant-based market, we hope to drive customers to our venues who have perhaps never tried Fat Hippo burgers before," adds Macdonald.

"There are a million ways we can celebrate this win, but we'll immediately be getting back to the drawing board, working out how we can restructure and building ourselves up to hopefully winning again next year."

**"THERE ARE A
MILLION WAYS WE
CAN CELEBRATE
THIS WIN"**



**FAT HIPPO'S SLOPPY FAUX,
PLANT-BASED BURGER OF THE YEAR**



**LEFT TO RIGHT:
DJ BBQ WITH ROB MACDONALD AND H2O
PUBLISHING'S GENNA ASH-BROWN**

**THE NEW YORKER FROM MOLLIE'S,
BLOGGERS' CHOICE**



BLOGGERS' CHOICE AWARD

Another top title went to Dan Gover of Mollie's, whose signature burger, The New Yorker, received the Bloggers' Choice Award, hand-picked by a team comprising @kate.ovens, @BigEatsGlobal and @thefatfoodie.

Gover's signature, The New Yorker, bagged him the win. This delectable creation featured two liberally seasoned burger patties topped with American

cheese, finely sliced white onions and crinkle-cut gherkins, served between a toasted bun smothered in tomato relish and chimichurri mayo, and accompanied with

steak sauce for dunking. "We competed for the first time last year and came second in the Signature round, which was cool," says Gover. "I absolutely loved coming back this year. Such a great vibe. And Brooklyn's my favourite beer, so I really can't complain. Obviously, whenever you do something for the second time it's a bit easier, right, because you know what you're coming into."

"It's a really supportive atmosphere when you're up there competing – but it really is wild! As long as you're well prepped, you'll be okay. And to win the Bloggers' Choice? Of course I'll take that! These guys are out there tasting burgers every day, so to know they saw something in our burger is great. I'm really happy with that." ►

**"TO KNOW THEY SAW SOMETHING
IN OUR BURGER IS GREAT"**



**LEFT TO RIGHT: DJ BBQ WITH DAN GOVER
AND AUBREY ALLEN'S SIMON SMITH**

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FREAKSHAKE CHALLENGE

**FREAK
Shake**
Challenge
— 2025 —



LEFT TO RIGHT: DJ BBQ WITH LEO FERENC AND H2O PUBLISHING'S HENRY NORMAN

THE FREAKSHAKE CHALLENGE COMPETITORS

- Andy's Burgers
- Big Licks
- Boston Tea Party
- Bun & Sum
- Bun By Bunka
- Herd Burger
- Leonati Street Food
- Roddy Burger

This year also saw the return of the Freakshake Challenge, with Leo Ferenc of Leonati Street Food, a catering business based in Sussex, winning Freakshake of the Year. His Shake My Sweet Burger incorporated milk, sugar, cream, fruit juice, chocolate, syrups, cake and various sweets and savoury snacks for decoration. And boy, was it a feast for judges' eyes as well as their tastebuds!

"We're predominantly a food truck business," says Ferenc. "We keep it nice, easy and lowkey, which gives us time to push forward with new ideas."

Sweet treats aren't usually top of the agenda for the Leonati crew, and while Ferenc initially entered the competition in the hopes of bagging a burger win, he couldn't resist the invite to enter the freakshake element, creating the Shake My Sweet Burger especially for the event.

"I got the email about the Freakshake Challenge, thought it looked great and then, bang! Off we go. I wanted something that was big and bold and, in some regards, have a comment on the burger. I wasn't competing in the 'Big Boy' game, so I made a burger to compete in the sugar department! I wanted it to look as realistic as possible. It had to look just like a real burger. It's been so fun, and we might actually start promoting it as a product for events."

"I MADE A BURGER TO COMPETE IN THE SUGAR DEPARTMENT!"



LEONATI'S SHAKE MY SWEET BURGER, FREAKSHAKE OF THE YEAR

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*It's a standard burger served in a pub or restaurant. Opeopl, Americana, Britain's Best Burger Research, January 2024.

& KEY OCCASIONS

PUB & BAR LOOKS INTO HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF FOUR KEY OCCASIONS OVER THE NEXT MONTH – THE GRAND NATIONAL, EASTER, ST GEORGE'S DAY AND BRITISH CIDER WEEK



GRAND NATIONAL 3-5 APRIL

Whether you support horse racing or not, there's no denying that the Grand National is an event that turns heads and holds attention every single year.

It's a bit like what the Six Nations is to rugby – millions may have a vague interest in the sport as a whole, but when the showstopper of the year comes to town, fair weather fans can't help but follow the action and have a little flutter or two. Here's where you come in (note: we are not suggesting you turn your pub or bar into a bookies!)

Seeing as this historic race (first run in 1839) excites so many potential pub goers, the main thing is to make sure you're letting people know you're showing it. While the grand event is on 5 April, there are two days of races beforehand, so plenty of time to inform guests about the climax of the occasion at 4pm on the Saturday.

ST GEORGE'S DAY 23 APRIL

For St George! What exactly is for St George, we're not really sure (and we'd guess neither are your customers), but that doesn't mean to say that *something* isn't for him, that's for sure, and we're ready to celebrate in his name... whatever it is.

Need a quick refresh as to what St George's Day is all about? We've got you covered. St George's Day is the feast day of, you've guessed it, St George, celebrated by Christian churches, countries, regions and cities of which he is the patron saint. Now, perhaps best not to lead with that description when marketing your St George's Day activations, but there is a key word in there to make the most of – 'feast'. Key occasions that revolve around specific countries and cultures allow pub and bar operators to theme their menus accordingly. So, roll out the roasts, prep your pies and prepare a free pint for anyone named George.





EASTER

18-21 APRIL

As much of the pub and bar industry does its best to drive footfall through the winter months, the fact remains that quieter moments offer the chance for planning and preparation for when spring arrives and things begin to warm up.

There are plenty of notable key occasions for operators to make the most of over the coming weeks, but the allure of a four-day weekend next month to celebrate Easter is undoubtedly one of the biggest events that the on-trade can capitalise on early in the year. So, the time has come to plan your menus, events, activations, parties, egg hunts... you name it. The bounty of the Easter bunny will soon be here.

Like so many occasions in the pub and bar calendar year, the key to maximising footfall and revenue during key occasions is to plan early and deliver effective marketing in the run-up to the main event.

BRITISH CIDER WEEK

25 APRIL-5 MAY

It's fair to say that beers and cocktails tend to hog the limelight when it comes to basking in their own respective key occasions, but let's pause for a moment and think about cider, shall we?

British Cider Week takes place every year, created through a collaboration of cider-makers, retailers and venues from across the UK. If you've never got involved before, based on the category's classic resurgence, now could be the time. The week features events from a wide range of producers, from new startups to traditional producers with generations of heritage. From country orchards to urban cider works, the organisers say there will be activity across the country, spanning from the cider heartlands of the West Country to the apple gardens of Kent.

If you'd like a few more pointers on how to make the most of this wonderful drink, flip to page 42 and you can immerse yourself in this issue's cider feature.



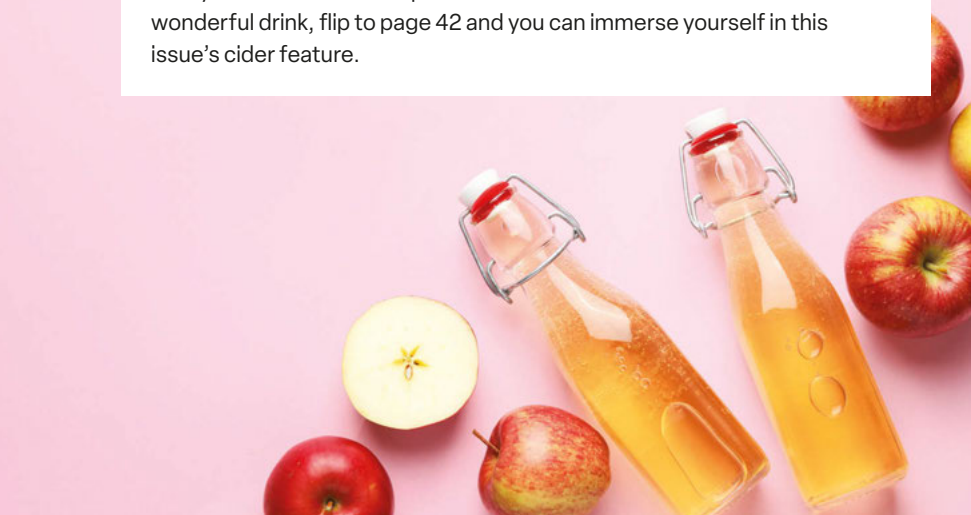
PROMOTED CONTENT

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STAR PUBS

GOOD TIMES AND TAN LINES

WHEN THE SUN IS SHINING AND THE WEATHER IS SWEET, YOUR SUMMER OFFERING MUST BE ELITE

There's nothing better than a warm day and a balmy night to get punters out on the town.

For fun-loving Brits, this time of year generally revolves around meet-ups for food and drinks at their favourite watering holes, so you best be sure your venue and menus are up to par in the run-up to summer, when the competition for trade will really heat up.

KEEPIN' IT COOL

An independent study by Carpigiani UK highlights the nation's growing thirst for frozen drinks. Far from being reserved for the height of summer, the Iced Insight report reveals that most consumers (62%) buy slushies and shakes all year round, putting the kibosh on the myth that these serves are just for hot weather.

"It's an exciting opportunity for operators to generate some buzz ahead of summer by adding limited-edition frozen cocktails and mocktails to their

menus," says Paul Richards, UK sales manager at Carpigiani.

According to the report, frozen serves really started to gain momentum in 2024, with everything pointing to an even greater leap in 2025. Of the consumers who indulge in slushies and frozen cocktails, including non-alcoholic options, almost three-quarters (70%) enjoy them more than their non-frozen counterparts.

"Demand for these drinks in casual dining outlets is increasing," adds Richards. "Fun, tasty and vibrant, frozen beverages not only offer up a variety of flavours, but can help to generate some noise around your menu. At the moment, customisation is really causing a stir when it

comes to drinks. Every mix and match option means the drink can be tailored to the customer, and we're seeing rising interest in the personalisation of frozen cocktails for this reason. With the right kit, they can be a simple menu addition."

**"WE'LL BE
FOCUSING ON
SMALL PLATES
AND SHARERS
TO INVOKE
THE SUMMER
PICNIC FEEL"**



BARBECUED MACKEREL, MARRFISH

SEASONAL TREATS

As the warmer weather rolls in, we'll see menus across the on-trade lightening up with fresh, seasonal produce. "The most exciting thing about spring in England is asparagus – one of the best food items we grow in the UK, which always rightly floods menus at this time of year," says Stephen Tozer, chef and co-founder of The Dark Horse in Camden. "A beautiful piece of British brassica at its best in spring is purple sprouting broccoli, which works in salads and veg dishes as people move away from rich, meaty dishes towards brighter options."

Barbecue season now extends beyond the height of summer, its popularity leading to a surge in dedicated restaurants, food trucks and pub and bar menu choices to satisfy the growing nation's growing love for all things smoked and seared. "Barbecue fare is generally hearty and notorious for a variety of griddled meats, burgers and sausages," Ben English, operations director at Marrfish, observes. "But there has been rising interest in lighter dishes and health-led nutrition awareness sees flame-kissed vegetables, such as grilled cauliflower steaks and aubergine halves, gaining popularity, with a number of seafood favourites also gaining favour."

At Brixton's Hope & Anchor, indulgent, sticky and gloriously messy sharers will be the flavour of the season, all sitting alongside vibrant salads and chilled, fresh sarnies. As general manager Zach Laroche explains: "We'll be focusing on small plates and sharers" ➤

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to invoke the summer picnic feel. Dishes like tacos and sticky bites will be some of the elements on our menus. With the warmer weather, we'll also look to include some frozen treats to spotlight some of the amazing seasonal fruits and berries on offer."

Shareable platters and small plates are ideal at this time of year, making the dining experience feel more social and giving guests the chance to sample a mix of dishes and flavours. "Handheld options, such as gourmet burgers, tacos, bao buns and wraps, are also perfect for summer," says Barnaby MacAdam, development chef at Paulig Pro. "They're portable, customisable and packed with flavour, making them a favourite for casual gatherings and relaxed events."

ALL ABOUT ALFRESCO

Nothing screams summer quite like the opportunity to drink and dine outdoors. There's something special about on-trade occasions spent out in the open, and alfresco works best with food and drinks that suit the relaxed yet sociable atmosphere. "Menus and food and drink pairing should focus on fresh, seasonal ingredients and dishes that are easy to eat in an outdoor setting," suggests Lauren Edwards, brand manager at

Franklin & Sons. "Drinks should align closely with these dishes, with spritzes, light cocktails and premium soft drinks offering a refreshing counterpoint to the warmer weather."

Summer came early to Tattenham Corner in Epsom, with the team officially launching its outside bar and kitchen in February. Adding another string to the pub's culinary bow, the outdoor food offer includes a Young's Burger Shack, along with a menu of street food dishes showcasing British ingredients. "We are lucky to have an expansive outdoor space that overlooks the beautiful Epsom Downs and Epsom racecourse, with space to host up to 400 guests," says general manager, Clara Corkery. "Our outdoor bar has 20 beer taps and is fully stocked with a premium wine and spirits offer, along with plenty of soft and no- and low-alcohol options for those popping in on a post-walk rehydration stop."

Any outdoor space can be converted into a functional and inviting dining area – it just takes a little imagination. For Vikki Duff, licensee of The Ship in Monkseaton, part of the Star Pubs estate, turning the disused courtyard into a garden full of quirky decorations has doubled the venue's capacity, boosted summer turnover by 70% and given winter trade a 200% uplift. Its recent £15,000 revamp includes a deck with glass balustrades and a family-friendly Astroturf area, which can be hired for functions. "The garden has transformed the pub and the functions are a great way to show it off and generate new regulars," beams Duff.



The Dark Horse in Camden boasts a wonderful west-facing terrace, featuring huge stable doors that can be flung open to conjoin it with the dining room and bar. "We'll be placing lots of tables out there and, if the weather is nice enough, we'll be bringing the outside in," chimes Tozer.

If you don't have an outdoor space to play with, no worries – there's plenty you can do to make your pub a cool indoor oasis for whenever the weather is hot. "If you have a small outdoor area, adorn it with light touches such as retro parasols for a summery feel," says Larochelle. "But otherwise, bring the outside in by throwing the doors and windows open and adding greenery to your interior."

And a parting word of advice from Tozer to keep punters cool and refreshed this summer: "Make sure the aircon is in good working order for the standard British heatwave no one is ever ready for!" ☀



Contacts

Carpigiani carpigiani.co.uk

Franklin & Sons franklinandsons.co.uk

Marrfish marrfish.co.uk

Paulig Pro pauligpro.com

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CUT TO THE CORE

WHILE FLAVOUR PROFILES AND ADDED FRUIT MAY STILL TURN HEADS, DATA SUGGESTS THAT PREMIUM CLASSICS ARE THE WAY TO BOOST CIDER SALES

Strawberries and cream, toffee apple, blood orange with chilli. No, this is not the half-term ice cream menu of your local soft play site – these are examples of flavoured ciders that were once tipped as ‘ones to watch’ for pub and bar operators, as eccentric taste profiles were predicted to be the next big thing in the cider category.

OK, they may have had a time and still generate some sales, but, ladies and gentlemen, this is 2025 – a year of no nonsense, reliable, honest preferences for clean, quality, premium drinks. And if there’s one thing you can say about cider, it’s that classic styles will always cut to the core.

“We haven’t seen many flavour trends change over the last year,” says Pete Hopwell, operations manager at Castle Rock Brewery. “The most popular is still a pint of draught cider. Over the last six months, these have made up 65% of our total cider sales, with over 75,000 pints sold across all our managed estate. As a pub group, we stock across a range of formats in most products – not just cider – as we feel our customers expect a good range of quality products, and providing that is key in keeping people coming back.”

It is a bit of an old cliché, but the quality that Hopwell talks about is certainly being sought after by guests, even in these tricky

economic times. Operators know that with money being tight for many, it is essential that pubs and bars offer top-class food and drinks, delivering value wherever possible.

“Despite the ongoing tough economic conditions, premium and flavoured ciders have been growing in popularity for some time now, and publicans can use them as important revenue drivers as they battle the effects of the cost-of-living crisis,” says John Price, head of marketing at Kingfisher Drinks. “Food pairing is still very important to cider drinking occasions too, with nearly half of all on-trade cider serves being with food.”

LET’S LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

While researching this feature, operators and suppliers alike told Pub & Bar that flavoured ciders are still popular with consumers – we’ll get to that, we promise. However, when you look at the latest data from our friends at CGA, pubs and bars can’t ignore the surge in popularity of classic apple ciders over the past couple of years. What’s more, this demand is still growing, which is worth keeping in mind as the warmer months approach.

“Apple cider remains the backbone of the category, accounting for around two-thirds of market value,” says Darryl Hinksman, head of business development at Westons Cider. “Notably it remains on an upward

trajectory, growing by 1.4%, even as the overall category experiences a decline of -2.1%. This reinforces apple cider's status as a top priority for venues keen to maximise sales and capitalise on emerging trends."

Hinksman and CGA highlight that draught apple is particularly strong, representing over three quarters of total draught cider and boasting a growth rate of 1.9%. This impressive performance is outpacing the broader market and is proof of the significant shift towards premium, crafted brands. As consumers become more discerning in their choices, it seems premium brands are leading the charge.

"While draught fruit cider faces challenges, there's a promising trend toward the premium sub-category, now valued at £86.5m, accounting for 31.2% of the total flavoured draught category," adds Hinksman. "It's clear that venues achieving the strongest cider sales stay ahead by adapting to market trends. The popularity of cider formats can vary based on factors such as age, season, venue and regional preferences. For example, draught apple cider reigns supreme in the south west, holding an 85.7% share, while Lancashire



JOHN LOGUE, FOUNDER OF CHANCE

"THESE HAVE MADE UP 65% OF OUR TOTAL CIDER SALES, WITH OVER 75,000 PINTS SOLD"

leads in draught fruit cider with 36.5%, well above the national averages of 76.8% for apple cider and 23% for fruit cider. These insights emphasise the importance of adapting cider selections to meet local demand and maximise sales potential."

While UK-wide suppliers will either hit that demand for recognisable brands

or potentially list ciders local to a venue, Hinksman's point of knowing the preferences of your immediate demographic seems obvious, but as he has highlighted, there can be some crucial nuances that determine what sells well year-on-year. Plus, there is always the appeal of something 'local' being poured from the taps. ▶

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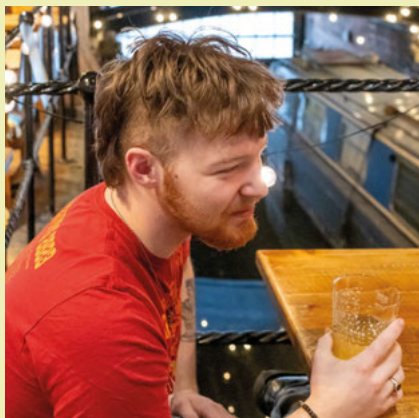
*Kam No&Low report 2024.





CIDER WITH CASTLE ROCK BREWERY

“VENUES ACHIEVING THE STRONGEST CIDER SALES STAY AHEAD BY ADAPTING TO TRENDS”



“Ciders from local and regional producers are always a hit, and what’s exciting is that ‘cider’ isn’t just one thing – it can include a huge range of ABVs, ingredients and flavour profiles,” says John Logue, founder at Chance Cider. “The best cider offerings bring all of this diversity into their selection, combining craft ciders with more familiar, widely-loved flavours. There’s no reason why your cider range shouldn’t get the same level of excitement and variety as your craft beer selection. After all, cider is the third-largest category in alcohol sales, while craft beer isn’t even the third largest in the beer category itself. With so many options to explore, it’s a great opportunity to diversify your offering and cater to an increasingly curious and discerning audience.”

THERE’S STILL FLAVOUR TO SAVOUR

As touched upon, it would be remiss of us (and pub and bar operators) not to acknowledge the flavoured side of the cider category. Indeed, at Castle Rock, Old Mout Berries & Cherries on draught makes up for 12% of all cider sales across the group, despite not being available in all its pubs. You can’t argue with that.

“While apple continues to lead the way in terms of overall sales, flavoured cider is attracting new consumers into the category from spirits and cocktails, and will continue to have an important role to play as a draught option while not taking sales away from the strength of the category in the fridge,” concludes Serena Smith, category development controller at Heineken UK. “Variety is important to customers when visiting pubs and bars, with half of cider drinkers who opt for flavoured cider saying they like having a variety of flavours from which to choose. When building out your flavoured cider range, consider starting with a berry-flavoured on draught, then complement it with a diverse selection of bottled ciders in the fridge, spanning both berry and exotic fruit flavours.” 🍷



PROMOTED CONTENT

COCK AND BULL ON A MISSION TO REDEFINE PLANT-BASED EATING

Introducing Cock and Bull (formerly known as Jampa’s), a bold, chef-led brand determined to redefine plant-based eating with premium, award-winning products that deliver on taste and sustainability.

Founded by chef Richard Fox and food industry expert Simon Hurley, Cock and Bull was born out of a simple yet ambitious goal: create tasty plant-based food, without compromise. Starting with their signature plant-based Porky Pie – a labour of love that has since won Best Product at the World Plant-Based Expo.

The range has launched with four products – a Traditional Porky Pie, its Choriz-no Porky Pie brother, a Saus-ish Roll, and Spicy Choriz-no Empanadas. In development for launch in 2025 are the Fake & Ale Pie, Choriz-no and Black Bean Pie, and a Beefy Bourguig-non, along with a selection of heat and eat meals including Spag Bol, Cottage Pie, Chilli Con No-Carne, Lasagne and Shepherd-less Pie.

cockandbullco.com
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Contacts

Castle Rock Brewery castlerockbrewery.co.uk
Chance Cider chancecider.com
Heineken UK heineken.co.uk
Kingfisher Drinks kingfisherdrinks.com
Westons Cider westons-cider.co.uk

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If you would like to get involved, please contact **Dan Hillman** at dan@h2opublishing.co.uk or **07833 248788** To support and donate, please visit www.foodservicefootball.co.uk

PUB REVIEW

CLAPHAM COMMON SOUTH SIDE, LONDON, SW4 9DE



TRISTAN O'HANA VISITS THE WINDMILL, CLAPHAM

ON THE EAST SIDE OF CLAPHAM COMMON IS A YOUNG'S PUB WITH A DECORATED HISTORY AND CLEAR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

My experience of Clapham Common is pretty much limited to sitting in my car, queuing to get from one side of it to the other. As a former south east Londoner with family in West Sussex, this was a standard route to take for those occasional meet-ups.

Although slow and painful, what congestion in these parts can offer is a chance to assess how the pubs and bars of Clapham are getting on – who has arrived, who has closed, who has the builders in. Various operators have come and go, but there are a few – in my time at least – who have always been there; fixed foundations of this south west London stretch.

One of those is The Windmill, a Young's pub sat proudly on the east side of the Common that is steeped in so much history, my snapshot observations of its lifespan are a mere blink when considering how far back one can look. It's believed that a pub has stood on this site since 1665, back when it was known as Ye Olde Windmill Inn. In 1899, Charles Young and Anthony Bainbridge's Young & Bainbridge bought the freehold, having leased the site since 1848. Then, in 1954, following the formation of Young & Co, the business acquired the neighbouring

hotel, known then as Holly Lodge, bringing the structural layout close enough to what The Windmill is today.

Until last month, my time crawling (in the car) past this pub had only resulted in one visit – a Mother's Day at least 10 years ago. So when the team at Young's asked us to come in to admire the investment that went into The Windmill's rooms last year, it certainly felt like another drop-in was due. In fact, The Windmill was one of three to receive the 'Young's Rooms' treatment during the 26 weeks to 30 September 2024, alongside Brewers Inn, Wandsworth, and

Coach and Horses in Kew. Such recent investments have resulted in steady sales growth of this arm of the Young's business, so expect more to come. One of its latest projects, The Teller's Arms in Farnham, took £73,000 in its first week of trading. Granted, this was a whole new site, but still. Impressive.

COMMON GROUND

The ground floor of The Windmill may be as familiar as the Common itself to Clapham locals, but that doesn't make it any less grand in scale and impact. Its various zones complement one and other wonderfully, as guests make their way from bar to pub to sports screens to restaurant. Such a structure must lend itself beautifully to a Sunday of Six





“WHEN IT COMES TO PUBS WITH ROOMS, THIS LEVEL OF DETAIL AND CARE REALLY HAS SET THE BAR”

Nations rugby and roasts. The night I was in, the screens had the FA Cup fixture Doncaster Rovers v Crystal Palace playing – hardly a blockbuster, but it had still attracted a few tables of beer drinkers in on a quiet Monday evening.

The dining room on such a night featured, as far as I could tell, mainly those who were staying in the exquisitely spruced up rooms above the pub. I’d certainly forgotten this space in The Windmill existed, and although the investment into its restaurant area was some years ago, its tall glass ceilings, blue velvet banquettes and plethora of plants have stood the test of time – it still feels like a grand setting to dine in. This really adds to the value of eating and drinking here, whether the guest knows it or not. It’s an elevated pub experience. What’s more, where value is concerned, you’re not going to find much better than The Windmill’s February menu that was on at the time. For £22, you could order three courses, including dishes such as pork, apple and leek scotch egg with English mustard;



Hertfordshire chicken leg chasseur with crushed celeriac; and sticky toffee pudding with clotted cream. Those three would set you back just £22, which, let’s be honest, could be the cost of a decent burger in some venues.

Talking of burgers, I stayed at The Windmill the night before helping judge the National Burger Awards, which involves trying 16 of the things throughout the day, so in hindsight, filling up on potato and mozzarella croquettes, and the steak and ale pie with creamy mash and hispi cabbage was probably an error. I wish I could say ‘you live and you learn’, but only half of that statement would be true.

It may have been the slow, full trudge up the old Windmill stairs – a nostalgic maze of old corridors and corners – but seeing the luxury of the room I’d been put in for the night was kind of breathtaking. We know that groups large and small are making some serious strides when it comes to the pubs with rooms market, but this level of detail and care really has set the bar. When talking about the focus of its Young’s Rooms division, the operator says it aims to “celebrate the enjoyment and unique experience of staying in a pub”. Well, when it comes to The Windmill, consider that bespoke celebration box well and truly ticked. 🍷



BED FOR THE NIGHT





Great taste SNACKTIVATED

SATIATE GUESTS' HUNGER PANGS BETWEEN MEALS WITH AN ELITE BAR SNACK SELECTION

The snack segment marks a wonderful commercial opportunity for operators willing to capitalise on it. A well-thought-out selection can increase dwell time and boost spend, providing a notable boost to profits throughout the year – especially when guests can't resist the range of nibbles on offer.

"While snacks won't replace meal occasions, they offer pubs the chance to trade up on drinks-only visits, with 56% of customers saying they like to consume savoury snacks with an alcoholic drink," says Stuart Graham, head of convenience and impulse at KP Snacks. "Impulse sales are critical to driving snacking sales, with 85% of consumers more likely to buy a packet of crisps if they are on display, so pubs should position their bagged snacks range with prominence."

But you know, there's so much more to this ever-growing segment than just those enticing packets stacked behind the bar.



CHEESE AND ONION, EVE BAR

WHAT A GUEST WANTS, WHAT A GUEST NEEDS

Here's a challenge: identify the perfect bar snack. It ain't easy, huh? That's because that great taste that really hits the mark depends on so many factors – the mood, the occasion and the budget being just a few.

As Nina Walker, catering development manager at Admiral Taverns, explains: "It's difficult to define the perfect bar snack, in part because there's such a huge variety available nowadays, but also because every customer and, crucially, every pub varies in what they want and can physically offer. It's certainly not a one-size-fits-all matter, so it's essential to take the needs of the community and the type of pub into careful consideration when reviewing a snack offering."

To help licensees identify the most suitable snack options for their venues, the group provides business development managers with multiple food solutions. This puts the power straight into the hands of those who know guests best, allowing them to make informed decisions on in-demand items when sourcing their snack selection. ➤



CHEESE COURSE, EVE BAR

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UP ON DRINKS-ONLY VISITS"**

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“We’re just about to launch ‘Bite-Sized’, a brand-new, quarterly training initiative – hosted virtually – to further guide licensees around incorporating bar snacks into their offering,” adds Walker. “The programme gives publicans an easy opportunity to speak to our expert team about what snacks are available on the market, what would work well in their pub and ways they can maximise sales.”

‘Plug & Play’ is another innovative, snack-oriented scheme offered throughout Admiral’s estate, designed to help licensees with limited capacity elevate their snack offering in an economical, space-saving way. As Walker summarises: “Through Plug & Play, licensees can upgrade their snack selection to offer pizzas, pies, nachos, hot breads and so much more without needing to invest in extensive equipment or additional staff.”

FLAVOUR CRUSADERS

Consumers today are on a constant quest to seek out great taste – and who can blame them?! Why waste time with sub-par munch when there are plenty of tantalising options that offer both great flavour and value?

The focus on specialist drinks in contemporary micropubs and traditional ale houses has significantly expanded the bar snacks market, and it’s vital for such venues to actively seek out nibbles that complement their serves.

CHICKEN SANDWICH, EVE BAR



“Landlords we have spoken to have found that traditional scratchings pair well with cask ales,” notes Brian Morrissey, CEO of Snack Brands. “Crackling and crunch are an ideal accompaniment to craft beers and ciders, so suitable for a wide range of venues.”

At Adam Handling’s Covent Garden cocktail venue, Eve Bar, guests often come looking for a balanced combination of savoury and sweet when it comes to snacks. “Most guests are looking for small and easy to eat,” bar manager Alice ‘AJ’ Ford observes. “They are often keen to try out several snacks, from things that are familiar like our doughnuts and potato tots, to something more adventurous like our crispy potatoes and caviar. Guests love discovering new dishes, while we love bringing that element of fun and experience to dining, all while providing options that pair with our cocktail menu.”

Handling doesn’t follow trends when it comes to snack development, choosing

instead to prioritise instinct and create food he knows he’d love to eat. The result? Recipes guests can relate to, with the power to conjure up precious food memories for all lucky enough to consume them. “Our potato tots, curry sauce and grated cheese are a prime example of this,” chimes Ford. “These small, puffed potatoes were created to taste like the cheesy chips and curry sauce chef Handling would enjoy back in Scotland, at the end of a night out.”

Eve Bar’s snack offering is made up of small bites like this, all of which aim to satisfy but also inspire a sense of nostalgia, very much like the drinks featured on the cocktail menu itself.

“Options that vary from small mouthfuls to larger bowls,” says Ford. “Many of our guests want to have an insight into the Michelin-starred experience at our sister restaurant, Frog by Adam Handling, and our snacks are perfect for this. We also have guests who come and join us after ➤

PAWS FOR THOUGHT

Jessica Morris, co-founder of The Canine Menu, on the growing demand for dog-friendly snacks in venues

With one in three adults in the UK owning a dog, the demand for pup-suitable snacks is higher than ever. The subsequent rise in dog-friendly venues has created an exciting new category of bar snacks – ones designed for four-legged patrons.

Pup-loving pubs don’t need to develop complicated menu offerings for guests’ furry friends; the market is rife with an easy-to-activate range of premium ambient snacks that tick all the boxes:

- **Long-lasting chews** will keep canine guests entertained throughout extended visits
- **Quick, sustainable treats** cater for casual drop-ins while supporting zero-waste practices
- **Dog-friendly beverages** create a complete menu experience owners love to share on social media

The key is quality over quantity. Venues that offer thoughtfully chosen, premium options will stand out without overcomplicating stock management.

By embracing the dog-friendly occasion, pubs can attract a loyal and high-spending audience of dog owners, while creating an inviting atmosphere for all customers – even those with four legs.





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dinner seeking a digestif and something sweet, so we either offer a dessert or our Eastwood cheese course. All our food is received incredibly well by guests, and they love the flavours!”

With health consciousness on the rise, the team at Eve are increasingly seeing guests with specific dietary requirements. Vegan and gluten-free are among the most common, and chefs remain mindful of these needs when developing the bar snacks menu. “We will always do our best to accommodate all guests, but we haven’t opted for the route of lighter options, such as charcuterie boards and the like, as we have our food identity. We want it to showcase our offering and pair well with our drinks,” says Ford.

COP A DEAL

If you really want to maximise the snack opportunity, think about special promotions or limited-time deals that can drive additional sales. A pint and a packet for a fiver? Yes please! A bottle of wine and two snack plates for £25?

“IT’S CERTAINLY NOT A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL MATTER”

How could one say no?! “Deals can be a great draw for guests,” says Ford. “Being based in the heart of theatreland, one of our latest packages is aimed at guests visiting to try snacks pre-theatre. We have a bespoke set of three cocktails based on a different spirit each month – they can get each drink for £10 or all three for £25. We also have a package called The Showstopper, which includes one of the cocktails, a choice of doughnut and the potato tots in one deal. It’s proved really popular!”

Just be sure to market your promos as they are the ideal way to pull in prospective guests – and, of course, carefully work out your margins, as you don’t want to find out down the line that your great value deal has left you out of pocket.

With all that in mind, go ahead and elevate your venue’s nibbles – your guests will thank you for it! 🍷



Contacts

KP Snacks kpsnacks.com

Snack Brands snackbrands.co.uk

The Canine Menu thecaninemenu.co.uk

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New Panizza

This oval shaped pizza base from Deli Conti Dough Company is supplied plain for busy chefs to create a bespoke pizza in either 10"x 6" or 12"x 7" sizes.

The dough has the same provenance as all Deli Conti Dough pizza bases and doughballs, made with 00 flour, sourdough and extra virgin olive oil, made to a slow fermentation process and entirely hand stretched. The toppings used are entirely at the chef's discretion, but if looking for inspiration, there are free menus available with every order.

info@deliconti.co.uk

PANESCO

Premium bread products

With authenticity continuing to be a key driver within hospitality, Panesco has tapped into this by adding two new premium bread products to its range, offering freshness, flavour and quality.

Made in Italy, the Pane Tartaruga can be served hot or cold as a sandwich carrier. This fully baked product is vegan- and vegetarian-friendly and comes pre-sliced for ease.

Panesco's Shell Roll Rye is made from a blend of rye and wheat flour, enriched with fermented sprouted rye grains and brown linseed.

panesco.com/gb-en



BUYER'S GUIDE



COUNTRY RANGE GROUP

Signature collection launch

The Country Range Group (CRG) is launching over 25 products into its Signature collection, aimed at discerning chefs looking to elevate their menus to greater heights.

The range, which becomes the third and premium tier of CRG's own-brand portfolio, features products from across the globe and is specially crafted to provide professional kitchens with all the tools to tempt and tantalise guests, while keeping costs at a minimum.

The Signature by Country Range selection includes desserts and ice creams, potato products, cheese, sourdough-style doughballs, sauces, teas and prawns.

countryrangegroup.com



NELSON

HydroMax Pro range

Warewashing specialist Nelson has launched the HydroMax Pro range of utensil washers to provide commercial kitchens with a solution for sparkling, hygienic pots and utensils.

The HydroMax Pro range reduces energy and water consumption and features Nelson's Wash360 system, ensuring thorough hygiene and cleanliness with every wash cycle. The ColourKey control panel offers a user-friendly experience with clear graphics and multilingual options. The range includes four floor-standing machines with baskets ranging from 550mm to 1,350mm.

nelsonwash.co.uk/commercial-utensil-washers



CARLSBERG BRITVIC

Rockstar Energy Zero Sugar Peach

Carlsberg Britvic's Rockstar Energy is launching its latest zero sugar addition to its portfolio, Rockstar Energy Zero Sugar Peach.

The supplier says Zero Sugar Peach is strongly placed to allow outlets to tap into demand for peach-flavoured drinks, with the brand worth £15m and with 93% of sales driven by flavours over the last year.

Additionally, the product packs will roll out with new festival-themed packaging, in line with Rockstar's ongoing partnerships with Gen-Z festivals including Reading, Wireless and Parklife.

carlsbergbritvic.co.uk

OIL CHEF

Oil Chef OCPFL

Oil Chef has developed a pressure fryer device that can reduce hand-breaded, bone-in chicken fry times by up to three minutes.

Compatible with all brands of commercial pressure fryers, the Oil Chef OCPFL serves to slow down the natural oxidation process of oil, therefore maintaining the low viscosity of the oil and boosting its thermal conductivity.

As a result, oil lasts up to twice as long, chicken texture and taste is enhanced, leaving the fryer minutes quicker too.

oilchef.com



BURTS

Herb Roasted Chicken crisps

British snack producer Burts is gearing up for the launch this month of its new Herb Roasted Chicken hand-cooked chips.

The new flavour will be revealed as part of the core range and available in 40g and 150g pack sizes across selected OOH channels.

Herb Roasted Chicken is designed to meet the growing consumer demand for premium, savoury, hand-cooked snacks. The product features real chicken sourced from Creedy Carver, Burts' Devon-based provenance partner.

burtschips.com



CREED FOODSERVICE

Kitchen '72 sauce range

Wholesaler Creed Foodservice has launched two new flavours to its allergen-free Kitchen '72 sauce range.

The new Kitchen '72 Caribbean Jerk sauce brings a combination of sweet and smoky notes, with herbs and spices including nutmeg, cinnamon, chillies, pimento and paprika along with onion, garlic and tomatoes.

The introduction of the Caribbean Jerk sauce follows the new Kitchen '72 Classic Salad Dressing, which launched late in 2024. While many salad dressings contain allergens like eggs and mustard, this vegan- and vegetarian-friendly option avoids these entirely.

creedfoodservice.co.uk

BEERS AND CIDERS

STRONGBOW

Strongbow Strawberry

Strongbow is expanding its flavoured cider range with the introduction of Strongbow Strawberry, its first flavour innovation in the on-trade in over 10 years.

Rolling out across pubs and bars nationwide, Strongbow Strawberry is available now, both on draught and in 500ml bottles.

The new cider blends the taste of Strongbow's Apple Cider with the natural sweetness of strawberries, creating a balanced, refreshing flavour. With an ABV of 4%, Strongbow Strawberry is made with real fruit juice and is free from artificial flavours, sweeteners and colours. Plus, it's gluten-free and vegan.

heineken.co.uk



KEYSTONE BREWING GROUP

Magic Rock and Fourpure

Keystone Brewing Group has secured the future of beer brands Magic Rock and Fourpure, both of which will join its portfolio of beverages.

Inspired by local brewing traditions and the vibrant US beer scene, Magic Rock Brewing was founded in 2011. Fourpure was founded in London in 2013 and has grown to be a much-loved brand with a wide range of easy-drinking beers.

Magic Rock and Fourpure join Keystone's beer brand and cider portfolio, including Black Sheep, Purity, Big Drop, Brick, Brew by Numbers, Wolf Pack and premium cider brand Maison SASSY.

keystonebrewinggroup.co.uk



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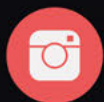
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EVENTS IN APRIL

<div><div>TUE 01</div><div>APRIL FOOLS' DAY</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>TUE 01</div><div>FOOTBALL PL</div><div> ARSENAL V FULHAM 7.45pm</div><div> NOTTINGHAM FOREST V MAN UNITED 7.45pm</div></div>	<div><div>WED 02</div><div>FOOTBALL PL</div><div> CHELSEA V SPURS 7.45pm</div><div> MAN CITY V LEICESTER 7.45pm</div></div>	<div><div>WED 02</div><div>FOOTBALL PL</div><div> LIVERPOOL V EVERTON 7.45pm</div></div>	<div><div>SAT 05</div><div>HORSE RACING</div><div>The Grand National</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>SAT 05</div><div>FOOTBALL PL</div><div> ASTON VILLA V NOTTINGHAM FOREST TBC</div><div> MAN UNITED V MAN CITY TBC</div></div>	<div><div>SUN 06</div><div>F1 JAPANESE GRAND PRIX</div><div></div></div>
<div><div>MON 07</div><div>WORLD HEALTH DAY</div><div>GOLF THE MASTERS BEGINS (until 13)</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>SAT 12</div><div>RUGBY GUINNESS WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS</div><div> FRANCE V WALES</div><div> IRELAND V ENGLAND</div></div>	<div><div>SAT 12</div><div>FOOTBALL PL</div><div> NEWCASTLE V MAN UNITED TBC</div><div> ARSENAL V BRENTFORD TBC</div></div>	<div><div>SUN 13</div><div>NATIONAL SCRABBLE DAY</div><div>F1 BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX</div><div>RUGBY GUINNESS WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS</div><div> SCOTLAND V ITALY</div></div>	<div><div>WED 16</div><div>FOOTBALL PL</div><div> NEWCASTLE V CRYSTAL PALACE 7.30pm</div></div>	<div><div>FRI 18</div><div>GOOD FRIDAY / BANK HOLIDAY</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>SAT 19</div><div>WORLD SNOOKER CHAMPIONSHIP (UNTIL 5 MAY)</div><div>RUGBY GUINNESS WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS</div><div> ITALY V FRANCE</div><div> ENGLAND V SCOTLAND</div></div>
<div><div>SAT 19</div><div>FOOTBALL PL</div><div> ASTON VILLA V NEWCASTLE TBC</div><div> FULHAM V CHELSEA TBC</div></div>	<div><div>SUN 20</div><div>EASTER SUNDAY</div><div>F1 SAUDI ARABIAN GRAND PRIX</div><div>RUGBY GUINNESS WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS</div><div> WALES V IRELAND</div></div>	<div><div>MON 21</div><div>EASTER MONDAY / BANK HOLIDAY</div><div>NATIONAL TEA DAY</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>TUE 22</div><div>EARTH DAY</div><div>ALLERGY AWARENESS WEEK</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>WED 23</div><div>ST GEORGE'S DAY</div><div>NATIONAL ASPARAGUS DAY</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>SAT 26</div><div>RUGBY GUINNESS WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS</div><div> ITALY V WALES</div><div> SCOTLAND V IRELAND</div><div> ENGLAND V FRANCE</div></div>	<div><div>SAT 26</div><div>FOOTBALL FA CUP SEMI FINALS</div><div>FOOTBALL PL</div><div> LIVERPOOL V SPURS TBC</div><div> MAN CITY V ASTON VILLA TBC</div></div>
<div><div>SUN 27</div><div>LONDON MARATHON</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>WED 30</div><div>INTERNATIONAL JAZZ DAY</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>DATES FOR MAY</div></div>				<div><div>SAT 31</div><div>CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL</div><div></div></div>
		<div><div>MON 5</div><div>CINCO DE MAYO</div><div>MAY DAY BANK HOLIDAY</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>SAT 10</div><div>NATIONAL DOUGHNUT WEEK</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>SAT 17</div><div>FA CUP FINAL</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>MON 26</div><div>LATE SPRING BANK HOLIDAY</div><div></div></div>	

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