



NICK HEMPLEMAN

I'm sure we've all had customers come in offering us their 'wonderful' home-grown produce. Personally I think there's an iron law that the better the customer, the worse their produce turns out to be. This makes it difficult to turn them down without feeling you're losing their support. So as we're at that glut time for gardens and allotments, I thought a few ideas on how to tackle it might be useful.

- Gardeners see their produce as their children. But the fact they love what they've produced doesn't mean the feeling is reciprocated. Those 'lovely' apples often turn out to be scabrous, odd shaped and liable to lose you money. Offer to take them on sale or return so you have given them a chance but don't risk losing out.
- Don't pay cash. They will be surprised how little you can offer and you'll often feel the need to



"There's an iron law that says the better the customer, the worse their garden produce will be"

overpay. Offer a swap instead, or vouchers if you do these in small denominations. Prick their conscience by suggesting you donate their money to your chosen charity.

- Whatever you take, make a song and dance about. Put it at the front of the shop, with a big sign. This will make the customer feel valued and demonstrate clearly to others that you support local produce.
- If you really don't want it, a few good excuses are useful. I often say, "I'm sure your plums are lovely, Mrs Miggins, but we have a local grower who relies on us and it would be unfair to leave him in peak season." This has the advantage of being true. I have been known to point pushy customers in the direction of our wholesaler.
- Be careful buying things from allotments. It is against the law for allotment-holders to sell their produce for profit. A donation to charity etc is acceptable.
- Check that the produce is not stolen. There's an increasing trend of thefts from allotments and smallholdings – especially with pumpkins and Christmas trees.
- Think creatively how you will use the produce if you don't sell it. Can you turn it into soup, salads or sauces? When you do, make sure you name-check the person on the menu.

www.thesussexproducecompany.co.uk



product news from Guild accredited suppliers



- Asiri Foods has launched two new Sri Lankan cooking sauces to be used with chicken, lamb, pork, beef, fish or vegetables.

One is a curry sauce with a blend of roasted spices and a tomato base. The other is a spicy sauce with a yoghurt base and authentic spices. Both are low in fat and enable a curry dish to be cooked in only 20 minutes. The products are available in 280g and 385g jars with RRP's of £2.50 and £3.95 respectively.

www.asirifoods.co.uk



- Two new meal kits have just been added to Bespoke Foods' Malay Taste range, a Laksa Kit (220g) containing laksa paste,

coconut milk and rice noodles, and a Nasi Goreng Kit (165g) containing nasi goreng paste, cooked rice and dried vegetables. Both kits have an easy-to-follow recipe, as well as product history and tips. The Malay Taste range is made and packed in Asia exclusively for Bespoke Foods, and is based on traditional Malaysian recipes.

www.bespoke-foods.co.uk



- Terra Rossa has put seven of its olive oils into a hand-made Jordanian bag to create a new product aimed at the Christmas gift market. Each bag contains un-filtered and cold-drip extracted

Sinolea extra virgin olive oil, a first cold-pressed filtered extra virgin olive oil and five infused olive oils – mint, basil, garlic, lemon and chilli. The seven-pack Jordanian Bag retails at £22.95. www.terra-rossa.com

- David Oliver Fine Foods aims to bring 'restaurant-standard' game dishes to the home. Chefs David Holliday and Oliver Shute established the business having seen the rise in popularity of venison and rabbit. The range includes Classic Venison Stew with Sweet Potatoes & Red Wine; Rabbit & Flageolet Beans with Courgettes, Lemon, Garlic & Rosemary; and Guinea Fowl & Puy Lentils with Shallots, Smoked Bacon & Carrots. RRP's start at £5.25.



www.davidoliverfood.co.uk

- Italian Roast is a new blended coffee roasted by Alpen Sierra Coffee Roasters in Nevada and imported and distributed in the UK by Glenfinlas Coffee. It is a dark roasted coffee that combines Indonesian, African and Central American coffees, and Glenfinlas Coffee recommends it is used as an espresso. The coffee has already received a one star gold 2011 Great Taste Award. It is available as whole beans in 340g retail bags and 2.27kg bulk bags. www.glenfinlascOFFEE.com



- Mendip Moments has redesigned its ice cream packaging. The duck egg blue and cream colours remain, along with the etching of the farm, but colour corresponding to the flavour of the ice cream has been added. A new Rum & Raisin flavour has also been introduced in a 4L size, and the Vanilla Bean flavour suitable for diabetics is now also available in the 120ml size. RRP's from £4.49 for 500ml. www.mendipmoments.co.uk



- Mr Organic has re-launched its range of Italian pasta sauces with new recipes and new branding. The Arrabiata, Puttanesca, Bolognese and Basilico recipes are tastier than ever, says the company. The sauces are all cooked in small batches using only sun-ripened tomatoes from farms near the Mr Organic factory 70km south of Rome. All ingredients are 100% natural and organic and nothing artificial is added. They are available in 6 x 350g jar cases, and each jar has an RRP of £2.29. www.mr-organic.com

- Meridian Sea is now supplying delis, farm shops and food halls with fresh and dried seaweeds, seaweed marinades, spreads, mustards and salts. Products are harvested, washed and prepared in a purpose-built factory in Brittany. Varieties include Sea Lettuce, Nori, Dulse, Wakame, Sea Spaghetti and Royal Kombu, all available freshly packed in 120g packs with a shelf life of 120 days. Other sizes from 250g upwards are supplied for catering or loose service over the counter. www.meridian-sea.com



- Kitchen Garden's new Red Wine Jelly with Herbs is made with Grenache from the vineyard of Domaine Sainte Croix in the foothills of the Corbières in Southern France. Herbs that grow in this rocky terrain – rosemary, thyme and juniper berries – add a savoury note to the jelly that can be served with paté, foie gras, and venison, as well as 'sanglier' the wild boar indigenous to this region. www.kitchengardenpreserves.co.uk