

BRITISH
CHEESE
WEEKENDER

23-25 APRIL

P R E S S R E L E A S E



British Cheese Weekender returns, in celebration of the artisan cheese revival

Friday 23 to Sunday 25 April 2021

Promising a unique peek behind the rind of artisan cheese in the UK, the British Cheese Weekender will return next month with a packed programme of online masterclasses, cook-alongs, tutored tastings and virtual farm tours.

Taking place from Friday 23 to Sunday 25 April, this year's festival will include Michelin-Starred Chefs, Simon Rogan and Tommy Banks, comedian and champion of British cheese, Marcus Brigstocke and The Cheese Bar's Mathew Carver. Sponsored by Opies, Peter's Yard and Tracklements, the three-day event will also feature many of the nation's top cheesemakers, cheesemongers and cheese commentators.

Organised by cheese writer Patrick McGuigan and Tracey Colley, Academy of Cheese director, and supported by the Guild of Fine Food and the Specialist Cheesemakers Association (SCA), the second edition of the free online event will be held in honour of the British public, who responded so enthusiastically to last year's rallying call to support small cheesemakers throughout the lockdown. Following artisan cheesemakers losing up to 80% of their business overnight when the hospitality sector was closed down, the huge outpouring of public support has brought many of Britain's finest cheeses back from the brink.

With online sales currently soaring, cheese lovers everywhere have gone a long way to safeguarding the future of specialist cheesemaking in Britain, although the vast majority of producers are still way down on income following the long absence of sales from hospitality and foodservice. As pubs and restaurants look set to fully reopen from 17 May, the British Cheese Weekender will call on people to show their support for cheesemakers when eating out, providing a much-needed boost for the hospitality industry in the process.

In the meantime, curd nerds can look forward to a festival like no other, with a line-up assembled from across the cheese community, featuring 'A British Cheese Road Trip' with cheese expert Francis Gimblett, 'Pandemic Cheeses' with cheese writer Patrick McGuigan, 'The Art of the Cheese Board' with The Fine Cheese Co., 'Flavour Mapping' with Mary Quicke of Quicke's and 'Cult Cheeses' with The Cheese Geek.

Virtual festivalgoers will be encouraged to buy plenty of cheese to get the full sensory experience and will be able to cook-along with top chefs each night, as Simon Rogan, Tommy Banks and Mathew Carver put cheese centre stage in their dishes.

Tracey Colley, director of the Academy of Cheese, commented: "We are thrilled to be bringing back the British Cheese Weekender for a celebration of our highly skilled British cheesemakers and as way of saying thank you to all who have kept buying British cheese throughout 2020. There will be a vast array of virtual events showcasing the diversity of cheese, delivered by our experts, so we invite any cheese fan to tune in and taste along."

Patrick McGuigan, cheese writer and co-founder of British Cheese Weekender, said: "There's been a clear change in people's cheese shopping habits over the past year with a big rise in online orders direct from cheesemakers and much greater support for local delis, farm shops and cheesemongers. This has helped the country's specialist cheesemakers navigate a really difficult period and bodes well for the future. The British Cheese Weekender aims to celebrate this resilience and the delicious cheeses being made in the UK with a diverse range of talks, tastings and cookery demos, as well as going deeper into issues such as sustainability, terroir, science and history."

Catherine Mead, chair of the Specialist Cheesemakers Association, added: "Following the enormous success of the 2020 British Cheese Weekender, the Specialist Cheesemakers Association is really proud to be supporting the 2021 event. Last year's British Cheese Weekender brought literally thousands of

supporters into our dairies and onto our farms, tasting some of our established cheeses and experimenting with the new and less familiar, giving them a better understanding of what it takes to make Great British cheese. Our thanks go out to the wonderful British Cheese Weekender organisers and we are all looking forward to getting involved and once again, connecting with our cheese champions and supporters.”

John Farrand, managing director of the Guild of Fine Food, commented: “Britain’s love for its cheesemakers came across loud and clear in their hour of need and it’s a huge relief to have made it through 12 months of unprecedented challenges with the vast majority of our cheese heritage still intact. This year’s festival gives us a moment to celebrate those cheesemakers, but also gives us a chance to salute and continue our support for independent retailers. Village stores, delis and farm shops have remained open and, in the main, have blossomed over the last year, becoming a critical service to their communities. They form the conduit between the makers and the cheese lover, so I hope the public will stand by them and continue to explore the rich cheese landscape on their doorsteps.”

The British Cheese Weekender 2021 will take place from Friday 23 to Sunday 25 April, running from 5pm until 10pm each day. For more information, visit www.britishcheeseweekender.com.

For further information, please contact:

Sam Brice at Freshly Ground PR

+44 (0) 7961 635960

sam@freshlygroundpr.co.uk

Notes to editor

Organisers and supporters:

Patrick McGuigan

Patrick McGuigan is the author of *The Philosophy of Cheese*, published by the British Library. He also teaches cheese courses at the Online Cheese School.

patrickmcguigan.com

Academy of Cheese

The Academy of Cheese was created in 2016 to establish an industry supported, recognised and certified development programme to promote cheese and knowledge.

academyofcheese.org

Guild of Fine Food

The Guild of Fine Food was formed in 1995 to support artisan food and drink producers and the independent retailers that sell their products. It has over 1,300 members.

gff.co.uk

Specialist Cheesemakers Association (SCA)

The SCA is an alliance of cheesemakers, retailers, wholesalers and others involved with artisan cheese, which was established in 1989.

specialistcheesemakers.co.uk

Sponsors:

Opies

Opies has been a firm family favourite since 1880, producing quality products to delight families every time. Opies is part of one of the oldest private family-owned food companies in the UK, best known for its famous pickled walnuts, cocktail cherries and cocktail gherkins.

opiesfoods.com

Peter's Yard

Peter's Yard combines Swedish tradition with British craft and natural, quality ingredients to create its hand-baked sourdough crackers. Each batch begins with their 45-year-old sourdough starter, which is fermented for 16 hours for a unique, subtle flavour. Made in its craft bakery in London, every product in the range is crafted without shortcuts or artificial ingredients for award-winning flavour and crunch.

petersyard.com

Tracklements

Based in the heart of Wiltshire, Tracklements lovingly makes an award-winning range of over 60 artisan condiments, from the UK's first Wholegrain Mustard to award-winning Fresh Chilli Jam. To make sure all of its products taste as good as the best homemade, Tracklements makes them in the same manner as cooks would at home; with the highest quality, natural ingredients, handmade in small batches.

tracklements.co.uk

Retail Associates:

The British Cheese Weekender 2021 is also supported by retail associates, No2 Pound Street and The Cheese Geek.

2poundstreet.com

thecheesegeek.com

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March 2021

