

Quality, not price, behind shift to own-label

A recent jump in sales of supermarket own-label products is being mirrored in delis with customers putting their trust in products carrying independent retailers' brands.

In supermarkets, own-label products now account for 41% of all sales – up from 38% in the past year, according to a report from Datamonitor.

Hampshire-based deli Caracoli has also seen rapid growth in its own-label products, which it makes in-house and sources from third parties, but it puts this down to customers looking for better quality rather than lower prices. "Own-label sales have tripled in the past year and now accounts for about 15% of the business," said John Nichols. "People come into the shop and can see what we're about, which means they trust the Caracoli brand and know the product will be of a high quality."

Kate Jones of coffee company Cherizena has seen a similar increase in own-label sales. "Two years ago we didn't supply any own-label products and now it accounts for 15-20% of our business. More and more delis are getting in touch asking about own-brand because they want something that is exclusive and gives them a point of difference from the supermarkets."



GOLDEN HANDSHAKE: John Shepherd (centre) of London food hall and deli chain Partridges took the stage at the Great Taste Awards finals, staged at Fortnum & Mason in London last month, to collect the Guild of Fine Food's Lifetime Achievement Award from Guild national director Bob Farrand (left) and BBC Radio 2 food correspondent Nigel Bardon.

Shepherd has run the family-owned business, with its flagship food hall just off Sloane Square, since 1979, when his brother Richard left to enter Parliament. Now with five stores, including a smaller food hall in Kensington and three upmarket grocery shops, Partridges was granted a Royal Warrant in 1984 as a grocer to the Queen, and John Shepherd was elected president of the Royal Warrant Holders Association in 2008. He was also the first chairman of the Guild of Fine Food. Now an active supporter of various charities as well as remaining firmly in control of Partridges, Shepherd organises regular markets for small, artisan producers around Sloane Square and other venues.

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Rowcliffe to 'concentrate resource on independent business'

Waitrose goes 'into the unknown' as Bradbury gets cheese business

By **PATRICK McGUIGAN**

Deli owners will be keeping a keen eye on Waitrose's top-end cheese range after it was revealed that Bradbury & Son has replaced Anthony Rowcliffe as the retailer's main supplier of such products.

The Buxton-based distributor took over the bulk of the contract to supply Waitrose's pre-packed British and Continental cheeses last month, although Rowcliffe's will continue to supply a reduced range of products to the retailer.

Rowcliffe's has also signed a deal to supply M&S with a range of pre-packed British cheeses.

Industry sources have told *FFD* that they expect few changes to the Waitrose range, although one said the retailer's decision to switch suppliers could be a risk.

"This is a voyage into the unknown

for Waitrose," he said. "One of its big points of difference with other supermarkets is its range of premium British and Continental cheeses. These are specialist products – unpasteurised, soft and short-shelf-life cheeses – which require technical know-how and a specialist approach. Rowcliffe's has a lot of experience in dealing with such products, while Bradbury's history is more in block cheddar and hard Dutch cheeses."

One independent cheese retailer told *FFD* that Waitrose's switch to



Bradbury could be bad news for delis and farm shops if it enables the supermarket to offer speciality cheeses at a more competitive rate. "Delis can comfortably compete with Waitrose on price at the moment, but it would be a concern if it started bringing them down," he said.

Rowcliffe's said reducing its level of business with Waitrose was part of a "strategy to concentrate its resource on its independent business". Sales director Steve Smith told *FFD* that the unit at its Tonbridge site formerly used for the Waitrose business would provide the company with extra capacity to grow. "Our independent business, which has always been a stand-alone operation, has seen sales increase by 5% this year and we have taken on over 120 new customers including delis, butchers, food halls and farm shops," he said.

Independent retailers attended a fresh produce workshop at London's New Covent Garden Market last month where they learned how to boost sales of fruit and vegetables. The free event, organised by the Guild of Fine Food, covered topics such as what to stock, cross-selling opportunities and how to merchandise fresh produce.



"Fruit and veg is a category many fine food stores struggle with, but if you get it right it can be a real money spinner," said Guild director John Farrand.

- The Real Bread Campaign has launched a national membership scheme for bakers, retailers and consumers. To join as a consumer costs £20 and members will receive a quarterly magazine, discount card and access to a members' area of the website. Businesses joining by December 18 are entitled to a 60% early bird discount, paying only £20 for the first year (usually £50).

www.realbreadcampaign.org

The British Retail Consortium has launched *The Food Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice: Retail*, which helps retailers, including delicatessens, comply with food hygiene legislation. RRP is £10.

www.tsoshop.co.uk

- Chris Reeks has taken award-winning La Hogue Farm Shop off the market and will continue to run it with his wife Jo. The couple decided to sell the Cambridgeshire business last year after Chris had a health scare, but he has now received the all-clear.

Scotland Food & Drink is hosting a 'meet the buyer' event for Harrods on November 10-11 in Inverness. Buyers from the food hall, together with the retailer's executive chef, will be looking for products across several categories, including cheese, charcuterie, bakery and traiteur.