

cheese shops

## La Cave à Fromage chain could reach 20 stores



**Eric Charriaux and Amnon Paldi (left) are searching for sites throughout the South-East**

Premier Cheese will open a second La Cave à Fromage cheese shop in Brighton this month as part of a plan to build a national chain of up to 20 stores over the next five years.

The cheese wholesaler, which is owned by Eric Charriaux and Amnon Paldi, has been improving its human resources and training programme at its first store in Kensington ahead of the roll-out.

Paldi told *FFD* that the company has been searching across London and the South East for suitable locations. "It's not easy to find the right

sites. We want locations that have very large windows so customers can see in and we can achieve a light and airy atmosphere," he said.

The Brighton shop is located on Western Road and will sell around 200 British and Continental cheeses, some of which are made and matured exclusively for Premier. The shop will also contain a 40-seater café selling cheese and charcuterie platters with bread from Boulangerie de Paris.

Like the Kensington outlet, staff will mingle with customers offering tastings and carrying out transactions via hand-held computers and printers.

"We are looking to open 12-20 shops over the next five years and we are open to sites across the UK," said Paldi. "We are also considering whether to do this by franchising."

campaigns

## Women's farming group backtracks over 'ban supermarkets' stunt

By **PATRICK McGUIGAN**

The new London branch of the Women's Food & Farming Union has been forced to hurriedly amend plans for a campaign 'banning' supermarkets for a month, after realising many British farmers actually supply the multiples.

The branch's new spokeswoman, Lady Sara Apsley, launched a 'ban the supermarket challenge' in the press last month, encouraging women to stop shopping at supermarkets for a month and switch to buying locally sourced food from independent retailers and direct from producers.

However, Lady Apsley told *FFD* that the campaign had now been adapted to include local products sold in supermarkets, such as Waitrose and Sainsbury's.

"A lot of [British] farmers supply

the supermarkets, so we have to be slightly careful about that," she said. "We don't want to cross them off the list completely. If you have to go to a supermarket, take time to look where your food comes from and only buy food from within a 25 mile radius."

Previously Lady Apsley had launched the 'ban the supermarket challenge' saying: "For one month this summer, I would like to invite everyone in this great nation of ours to ban themselves from buying their fresh produce from the big-name, commercialised supermarkets."

The campaign is due to launch in September with a meal made from local ingredients, cooked by Lady Apsley and her friend Jackie Llewelyn-Bowen, wife of TV presenter Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen.



**Lady Sara Apsley: 'A lot of farmers supply the supermarkets, so we have to be slightly careful'**

# If I'd known then what I know now...

**Stephen Shaw,**  
Fine Food Theatre,  
Malton, North Yorkshire



We opened the deli 12 years ago after 20 years spent running a bakery business with two small shops and wholesale deliveries. Our smallest sandwich shop was next door to a deli that had failed twice in the previous year, but we were up for the challenge and understood what was necessary for it to work.

Anyone buying a business must make the effort to study the area closely, understand the footfall and the potential customer mix. We got that right.

An identity change was essential to break the link with the previous failures. Our refitted shop included a takeaway food operation and a bistro-style café in addition to the deli. This broader base gave the business a chance to survive. A year later we added our own bakery facilities and have not looked back.

The bakery is the beating heart of the deli. All our bread, rolls and quiches are made on site and we do

"We could have focused more on getting our presence known"

not make anything for any other shop. With so much competition, you have to do something special to get people through the door. We got that right too.

There are things we could have done much better. We could have focused more on getting our presence known. It was only a year ago we paid for new signage over the shop front. That has worked wonderfully and I kick myself for not doing it earlier.

We have been poor at promoting our products but our daughter Helen has done a lot to improve this area recently. We stock 60 different cheeses and she now displays and promotes them by nationality. She has also entered us in a national deli competition and has done a lot to get feedback from our customers.

We now stock the deli with items that sell, rather than being self-indulgent. Customers decide what the shelves should carry. We opened our shop full of items bought after visiting a food fair and listening to the reps. Things like jars of fruit and fancy gift items. That was a big mistake. Though the shop looked good, many of those higher end items never sold.

One of my other regrets is giving three years trading figures to a potential purchaser of the business, only to find that same person open up in competition to us. That's a lesson for everyone selling a business.

Our response was to play to our strengths and we went up a gear in the bakery, bringing in organic breads, olive and garlic cobs and sourdough. It seems to have worked because we've just had our best year yet.

Interview by **PATRICK McGUIGAN**