

*This is Devon -
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Food & drink



PACKED with delicious Devon delicacies, the food and drink area is one of the most popular show marquees and, this year, the exhibit has been upgraded to pavilion status.

"We hope that we will benefit from this new coverage, it is very smart," said chief steward David Scoble. "We do find that there is a lot of interest in food and where it comes from."

Fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, bread, honey, meat and many more mouthwatering treats will feature at the food and drinks pavilion. And as one of seven pit-stops for the children's Show Trail — a new scheme which guides youngsters around the showground to learn about food and farming — the marquee will be heavily involved in promoting the Year of Food and Farming.

"We are trying to encompass the Year of Food and Farming within the exhibition," said David. "It is all about educating children and showing them the products of the land and how they are made into food."

"When the kids get here we will give them a questionnaire to fill in and the answers will be in the marquee.

"There will lots of lively exhibits, like a cider making demonstration. Cheese maker Robert Kitchen, from Lancashire, is back and will be showing audiences how one gallon of milk can be turned into cheese, which visitors can then try for themselves."

While many of old favourites have returned this year, the food and drinks pavilion is for the first time featuring a small producer's area, enabling six less known local producers to showcase their goods.

Dave and Marilyn Johnson, of Norsworthy Goats Cheese, near Crediton, are one of the six. They may be a small cottage industry, but their hand-made unpasteurised cheese won them gold in the 2006 British and world cheese awards.

"Rachel Stephens of Curworthy cheese really pushed to have a small producer's tent," said Dave. "Last year

she sent tickets to us so we could have a look around the show and see what we thought. We said if they could make the pitch smaller it would be better, so they agreed to do that this year.

"We have got our own goat herd of Saanen, Toggenbur and Alpine goats. We make hard and soft unpasteurised goats' cheese and we do some with added ingredients, such as our Posbury, which has garlic, onion, horseradish and paprika, and a blue cheese called Nanny Bloo which leaves a tingle on your tongue!"

Cheese

"I think we are the only producer in Devon that makes unpasteurised cheese from start to finish, hand-made on the farm."

Dave and Marilyn say they hope exposure at the County Show will raise their profile and increase their trade.

"We are hoping to make people aware of us, to let them know that we are here," said Dave. "We are really looking forward to it. I just hope I have enough cheese!"

Common Loaf Bakery, at Stentwood Farm, near Dunkeswell, is one of three bakers exhibiting this year. Established in 2000, the bakery makes a range of sweet and savoury wheat-free breads, pizzas, pastries, cookies and other bits and pieces using mainly spelt and rye flour.

"We saw there was a need for a wheat free bread so we decided to go that way and it has been good for us," said baker Christopher Pollen. "We have a large variety of bread with and without yeast which is good for people with allergies. This will be our sixth year at the show and we will be selling our whole line, including our cheese and onion swirls which have been really popular. We'll probably feature carob and walnut brownies, American style granola with honey and an olive and walnut sourdough."

"To support the Year of Food and Farming, which is the main theme of the show, we will have a sign on our stand describing what the food is made from."

Meanwhile, lots of talented chefs will be lining up at the cookery demonstration tent to show off their culinary skills.

Mark Street, from Dart Marina Hotel, in Dartmouth, and Dez Turland, Chief Executive chef of the Brend Hotel Group will be hotting up the marquee along with other local chefs.

"They will use as much local produce as possible, and this year, we will be showing how to be more economical while cooking and how to turn cheaper bits of food into delicious meals," said home economist Celia Hyland, who is in charge of the cookery demonstration.

"There are quite a few pieces of meat which with careful cooking can be delicious, such as mutton, shin of beef, breast of lamb, and pork belly!"

"We want people to know that that cooking is not scary and local food is not for the elite — everyone can cook and everyone can use local food."

"For me, a compliment is when someone comes up to

Dave Johnson of Norsworthy Dairy Goats with some of his cheese
ANDY GREEN EE310308_AG02_17



me and says, that was easy and interesting, even I could do that! — that's what it's all about."

This year Celia says there will be a focus on getting children involved. "Cooking ties in with the curriculum because it involves maths, measuring, following instructions, tidying up and working with other people," she said.

"The exhibit is wonderful and it's traditional. Food is part of our heritage and having this exhibition is good for the county because it promotes local industry. And of course you get to meet people you haven't seen in ages!"

At the Contented Cow tent, 12 of Devon's finest breweries will be showcasing their top selections. Show steward Guy Shepard, of Exe Valley Brewery, helps to organise the event.

"We pool all our beers together and similar number of Devon ciders," he said. "Our feature beer this year is Otter Source, from Otter Brewery. It ties in with what the show is all about — getting back to basics and showing people where food comes from."

"We will be open from 9am until 11pm each day so other exhibitors can come down for refreshments!"

"Westpoint is a lovely venue to come to and we are here to support each other. It's all about local and all about Devon."

Otter Source is unlike any other ale at Otter Brewery, a family-run business, based in Luppitt, near Honiton. The ale has been specially made for the County Show and will star as the feature beer at the Contented Cow tent.

Patrick McCaigh is brewer sales director. He said: "Otter Source is a cask ale and it's the first beer that we have ever brewed at four per cent. It is made using spring water from our own source and malt which is locally sourced, tying in with the Year of Food and Farming."

"It will taste well rounded and bitter, and if it proves popular we might continue with it after the show."

"The Contented Cow tent in itself is a great platform for Devon to display its best breweries. It reflects the ethos of the show which is the local community working together."

"I think what we will endeavour to do this year is educate the public about the merits of regionally produced ales and drinking it in pubs. There is so much negative publicity about pubs

and binge drinking, but pubs in the Westcountry are fine places to go."

"Binge drinking is caused by cheap alcohol bought at supermarkets, not quality regionally brewed ales available in local pubs."

The South West Wine and Beer Federation includes 22 clubs across Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. Their wine and beer tastings are always popular events and, this year, they have a staggering 20 gallons of wine and 18 gallons of beer to give away.

The competitions include 12 wine classes, 14 beer classes, and four cup classes, rated by South West and national judges.

"We have around 16 federation members helping out at

the tent and speaking to people about wine making beer making," said show steward Maurice Powell.

This year the show will bid farewell to Maurice who, after 43 years of service, has decided to retire from his position as show steward.

"Unless I can find someone to take over our tent won't exist next year, I hope someone can be found to take on the responsibility," he said.

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