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ALLISON RISEBRO



This issue's cover star is Mary Brunning of R&G Fresh Herbs



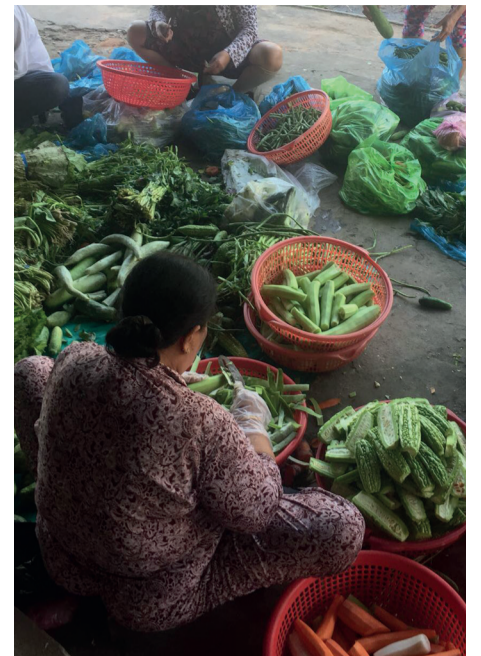
Vernon Mascarenhas helps tackle food waste in Vietnam

Vernon Mascarenhas, formerly of First Choice Produce, and food sustainability champion, did his bit to tackle food waste by volunteering at a soup kitchen on a recent holiday to Vietnam.

“When a member of staff at the hotel where I was staying said she worked in a soup kitchen, I decided to help. At 6am, volunteers and I went down to this local fruit and veg market, where stall holders donated their leftovers, then to the kitchens to prep and cook it all. It was all improvised, all vegetarian - we didn’t follow any recipes but we did have access to loads of brilliant spices.”

At 10.30am they opened the doors to serve up food to 250 homeless people. Commenting on the experience, Vernon says, “a soup kitchen is the same wherever you go in the world. They’re all based on the same principles: reducing food waste, volunteering, and helping those in need, without discriminating between individuals.”

Vernon was also one of the first to start working with City Harvest (across page) on the market.



Left to right: Vernon with the meal cooked at the soup kitchen, the volunteers prepping



Left to right: Danny Murphy and son Paul Murphy at the old market, and together in 2017

Danny Murphy celebrates over 50 years of work on the market

Danny Murphy’s got history - with the market, and London’s food scene. He’s been part of its fabric for more than 50 years and seen the market’s transition from its original home at Covent Garden to here on Nine Elms. As he celebrates this milestone, he shares a snapshot of his rich experiences along the way.

“I started in the market in 1963 as a banana cutter at Kaufman’s (a banana importer) on Mercer Street, Seven Dials. That was back when the bananas used to come in on stems, some 6ft tall. My first porter’s job was at A. Phillips on King Street, then Baker and Kemp on James Street - a great English farmer with so many different varieties of tomatoes coming in. Next I worked for Tunnard’s at the Jubilee Hall, in Covent Garden, a family run veg firm - loading up to 40 bags of potatoes onto the barrow at times.

“Then it was Coxhill – a British fruit and veg wholesaler on Russell Street. I remember unloading the first container of fruit that came into the market from the continent. There were no fork lifts then, it was all by hand.

“I moved over to the new market with Sapphires, a wholesale fruit and veg company until the 1980s, then to Poupart, a fresh produce company. I left to open the first Café Rouge in London with my wife Bettie in 1988, and in that year I founded Chef Connection on the market. My son, Paul, took over as Director in the 1990s.

“Then, we opened YesChef in 2014. So I’ve seen a lot! I remember the buzz of old Covent Garden with all the theatre goers and showgirls – the community’s what makes the market special. Even when we moved we took that spirit with us.”

Christmas opening hours

Check with your wholesalers for the exact dates and times they’ll be open over the Christmas period, as this can vary.

Friday 22 Dec
 Saturday 23 Dec
 Sunday 24 Dec
 Monday 25 Dec
 Tuesday 26 Dec
 Wednesday 27 Dec
 Thursday 28 Dec
 Friday 29 Dec
 Saturday 30 Dec
 Sunday 31 Dec
 Monday 01 Jan
 Tuesday 02 Jan
 Wednesday 03 Jan

Fruit and Veg Market

Open
 Some wholesalers open
 Closed
 Closed
 Closed
 Open
 Open
 Open
 Some wholesalers open
 Closed
 Closed
 Open
 Open

Flower Market

Open
 Some wholesalers open
 Closed
 Closed
 Closed
 Closed
 Some wholesalers open
 Some wholesalers open
 Some wholesalers open
 Closed
 Closed
 Closed
 Open

City Harvest thanks the market for another year of incredible support

City Harvest London, the charity that gives food another life by redistributing surplus food to organisations that feed the hungry, celebrates another fantastic year working with New Covent Garden Market. Its Director, Mike Motl, shares a few words of thanks to show his appreciation to all the people on the market that make this possible.

“The help and support New Covent Garden Market has given City Harvest over the last two years has been incredible. The generosity of many of the traders has really helped the organisations City Harvest supports to provide healthy food for people who have fallen on hard times - from the residents of hostels, to those who rely on meals from soup kitchens, many people have been provided for in moments of difficulty thanks to the produce donated by the market.

“Coming to the market is often the highlight of my week. The people make it an enjoyable day and I always leave knowing the rest of my day will be good. The residents of Thames Reach Graham House, L.A.C Bondway and Rachel House, the people who eat at The Passage, Ace of Clubs and those who One Big Family supports - they receive deliveries every Friday from the market.

“In the run up to Christmas, the food I collect from the traders at New Covent Garden Market will really help the organisations that we deliver to. The delicious fruit and vegetables will help nourish them in the cold. Many people will have a tough Christmas but perhaps a good meal will go some way to helping them through a tough time.”



Above: Mike Motl of City Harvest

Creative hub on B Row home to local resident artists



Left to right: *King of the Crop* illustration, Raksha in her studio on the market

Amongst the pallets and produce on the market, you might just find a paintbrush or two. Inside some of the offices on B Row nestle a group of local artists in residence who remain hidden to the majority of New Covent Garden Market. In fact, they've been occupying this space since 2014.

Raksha Patel, one of the freelance artists in residence, explains, “we're part of an artist organisation called ACAVA who work with Wandsworth Council - that's how we first heard about the space. There are five of us here, we have one office each, and we all produce different types of art. I paint, Peter does performance sound and video, Jacob's a photographer, Tom does sculpture and painting and Roberto's a glass artist.”

The artists make their work on the market and exhibit them nationwide in galleries or museums.

The market has been a source of inspiration for some of Raksha's own work. “Before, I was making work inspired by plants and flowers. So when I came here the market became really relevant. That work continued to grow as I started sourcing fruits and vegetables from the market.” Her piece *King of the Crop* (above left) was directly inspired by produce bought here.

Although the artists only use the space part time, as most have day jobs, the doors are open in the summer when it's warmer so people can pass by and say hello. Find them upstairs on B Row in offices B115-120.



Above: Robert Hurren and Matt Smith

Channel 4 film County Supplies London for Food Unwrapped series

The spotlight was on County Supplies London when Channel 4 came down to the market to film them talking about micro herbs for its series, Food Unwrapped. Presenter Matt Smith chatted with Robert Hurren, Director at CSL, to get the low down on the rising popularity of this fashionable veg du jour.

Whilst there was an export angle to the programme's story, Rob was keen to promote the importance of locally grown. “We explained that micros are becoming a lot more readily available these days and that most of the ones we do are home-grown - I like to encourage the use of local English produce as much as possible.”

The programme is expected to air sometime in January or February 2018.

The CGTA celebrates a phenomenal year of fundraising and awards

A night to remember as the CGTA raises £60,000 through its annual tenants' ball

This year the The Covent Garden Tenants Association raised just short of £60,000 for its chosen charities through its annual tenant dinner dance, held November 25 at the Lancaster London Hotel.

Trinity Hospice and Anthony Nolan have long been the chosen beneficiaries of the generosity of the market, its suppliers and its customers. Over the last 15 years the CGTA has raised upwards of £600,000 for both, a staggering figure that received recognition when the CGTA won Organisational Fundraiser of the Year 2017 at the Anthony Nolan Supporter Awards.



Above: Members of the CGTA presenting cheques to their two charities



Tony Allison receives Lifetime Achievement Award

It was further cause for celebration when Tony Allison, of Allison Risebro, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the CGTA at this year's dinner dance.

Gary Marshall, Chairman of the CGTA, says, "Tony is a true gentleman in every sense of the word, a true supporter of Covent Garden Market and a man who has given many hours of his free time to be an active member of my executive. His reputation is second to none."

Clockwise bottom left to right: Tony Allison, Clive Sparshott and Gary Marshall, shots from the tenant dinner dance, Tony Allison with his Lifetime Achievement Award

CGTA wins Organisational Fundraiser of the Year Award for Anthony Nolan



Above: Gary Marshall, Simon Dyson (Chairman of Anthony Nolan), Ann Harding and Damian Fowler at the Anthony Nolan Awards

The Covent Garden Tenants Association won the Organisational Fundraiser of the Year category at the Anthony Nolan Supporter Awards this October. The prestigious award recognises organisations that have gone above and beyond to fundraise for the charity.

The CGTA has supported Anthony Nolan for 14 years in memory of the son of one of its traders who passed away from blood cancer. To date, it's raised over £250,000 for Anthony Nolan.

Chairman of the CGTA, Gary Marshall, says, "we're extremely proud that we have been recognised by Anthony Nolan and absolutely chuffed to be winners. This award reflects the incredible generosity of the Covent Garden Market community – the people who work in the market, their families, our suppliers and our customers.

"It gives us an extra little bit of motivation to continue our work but I am also very humbled by the amount of time and effort that people give to Anthony Nolan.

"This year's dinner and dance has already raised over £60,000 and more money is still coming in. I can't thank everyone enough."

Henny Braund, Chief Executive of Anthony Nolan, says, "we're delighted that the Covent Garden Tenants Association has been recognised for their incredible support. Their dedication to helping those who have undergone a stem cell transplant has meant that more patients will get the lifesaving transplant they need."



Above: Shots from the tenant dinner dance

What's on your plate for Christmas?

We spoke to people on the market to find out what they'd be eating this Christmas. From simple spreads and fancy feasts, to vegan and oriental cuisine, there's an appetite here for a bit of everything.

▶ Kieran Donaghey – 2 Serve Wholesale

“We have a bottle of champagne to start at 10am. Then we all sit down to eat the main meal around 2pm. We share everything. We have duck, turkey, all the trimmings - stuffing, Yorkshire puddings, cranberry sauce, honey roast parsnips and sprouts, obviously. I don't like them but my mum makes me eat them. She just boils them. I'll eat three, then I'm done.”



▲ Mehmet Yilmaz & Petra Vassova, Market Café

“We have a tomahawk steak, which is like a ribeye on the bone that we get from Smithfield Market. We'll serve that with homemade chips and peppercorn sauce. I'll have cooked about 50 turkeys that month so I'm sick of the smell of it! It puts me off. We'll have tiger king prawns as a starter, too. I reckon there'll be ten of us this year. It's nice.”



▲ Shiva Nava, Post Office

“That's the day all my friends and family get together. We have a turkey and a normal Christmas. I like Fosters, the Australian lager. But I don't like sprouts. There's no proper explanation why - it's just not one of my items. I love the M&S pudding. It's always M&S with custard. Christmas is one of the best things: a break; drinking; stretch your legs; films ...”



▲ Geoffrey Lewis, E.A. Williams

“We have the same every year. We'll have turkey and lots of vegetables - normally broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, beans and then the turkey. There's only four of us. Nothing to start, though, we just go straight for the main event. We don't do pudding, I'm not really into it. I'm not a fan of mince pies either but my wife is. We'll drink red wine on the day.”



◀ Alfie Ooi, Rotterdam Oranje

“We mix it up with Asian and Western food. Breakfast usually consists of grilled and steamed dumplings with rice porridge then lunch is very much a Western affair. We don't do Turkey, it's too easy to overcook. So we'll be having a chicken roast with all the trimmings then a rice or noodle dish to accompany. We'll play monopoly but as ever, accusations of cheating - usually between Ray and I - will signal the end of the game null and void. That's Christmas!”





▲ **David Watts, Worldwide Exotics**

“It’ll be traditional this year. Turkey, roast potatoes, roast parsnips, pigs in blanket... We have prawn cocktail with melon and ham to start – it’s an easy starter with a traditional main, and a cheese board and port. I do most of the cooking. We normally get a boneless crown of turkey and cook it on Christmas Eve and then reheat it in gravy so it stays nice and moist. I never lay in, I’m always first to rise so I’m always the first up on Christmas day too.”



◀ **Kim Powell, The Flower Store**

“I’m vegan so it’ll be a nut roast of some description, or Seitan, which is a meat substitute made out of gluten. My daughter and son-in-law are vegan and my husband’s vegetarian. We don’t have anything to start but we do a big dessert, usually. It’ll be a crumble, or Christmas pud and custard. Supermarkets do everything vegan now, custard, double cream, it’s all brilliant. What will I be drinking? Whatever’s about! Red wine’s my favourite but again, it’ll be vegan - believe it or not a lot of wines aren’t.”



◀ **Ray Long, Meal Maker**

“We’ll have a crown of turkey, sprouts from Meal Maker, Vivaldi and Chateau potatoes, which is like a fancy shaped potato, done in goose fat – you could eat that forever. It’s all about the presentation. We’ll have heritage carrots in three colours – yellow, white, black, all cooked separate. All from the market. The plate is a picture. We do a blinding fruit salad. There’ll be six of us on Christmas day and 16 on Boxing Day. Well, 15 when I go down the pub.”



◀ **Cory Bridgeman – Covent Garden Supply (Import and Direct Sales)**

“Turkey, lamb, chicken, fish, every single meat – I’ve got a big family! There’s nearly twenty of us. Then all the veg, obviously. Pigs in blanket, mac and cheese... I’m from Barbados so it’s Caribbean seasoned. We make a pot of seasoning with scotch bonnets, onions, tomatoes and curry powder then blend it all up and dry-rub the meat with that. We have a cup of Advocaat mixed with lemonade when we wake up in the morning. Christmas at our house is like a proper event.”

▼ **Simon George Spencer, P & I Fruits**

“I have the Market Café Christmas dinner every single day in December. Then at home we’ll order stuff from M&S with lots of nice nibbles - like pork belly, you know the ones you get on those square sticks? We’ll have a chicken roast with all the trimmings. Turkey’s too dry – we all had a vote on it one year and went for chicken. If someone serves up a turkey leg, I can’t stand it. But I’ll eat it anyway. Dad always used to light a Christmas pudding with brandy so for tradition we have that.”

▶ **Liz Inigo Jones, Blue Sky Flowers**

“We usually do a three-bird roast because it’s easy and there’s always loads left. And we have a ham because my son likes ham and it gets eaten for days afterwards. Days and days. Then we have about 17 different vegetables because my husband can’t decide what he wants. And the smallest but nicest Christmas pudding we can find because it’s tradition, you have to walk a mouthful. We sometimes go for a walk on Hampstead Heath later, if we can move, or to the neighbours for a drink. We’re a very small unit so our family at Christmas are our friends.”



◀ **Mark Mansfield, S Newman**

“We start with Buck’s fizz about 7 or 8am. Not too early, not too late. We have a fry up then a late dinner. I take home a cotchel on Christmas Eve from the market. And then it’s generally just wine throughout the day, spirits in the evening. I like whisky. I’ve got loads of single malts. Sounds very odd but a bunch of my mates who I go out drinking with do a shot of Bailey’s and Jack Daniel’s Honey so I’ll have that on Christmas day.”



2017 business highlights

It's been a year of hard work and accomplishment across the entire market. Here, we take a look at some of the business highlights of 2017.

February



Above: Paul Bishop in one of the cold pots

P & I Fruits invests £300k into building temperature-controlled cold pots

In February, P & I Fruits made an investment of more than £300k to expand its cold pots to nine bays long, a project that took around 3 months to complete.

Paul Bishop, P & I Director, says the decision was partly to show backing for the business. "We wanted to do it to improve the shelf life on our produce, plus it gives our suppliers more confidence. They see we've invested in the firm and want to do things properly."

Everything stays temperature controlled, with different temperatures within each pot. Paul says, "this protects the produce, which means we can back our judgement by buying more stuff to keep it in the right conditions for longer."

"A project like this isn't for show. It's for practical purposes and it's a functional investment. Customers will get their produce back, it'll be better quality but they won't go 'Oh, that's because of their cold pot.'" What they will do is they'll keep buying, and subconsciously, they'll be buying more often. We're evolving with the industry – it's a great advert for the market."

It's also enabled them to streamline processes and, as a result, improve customer service. Paul says, "the open channel down the middle of all nine bays makes it more functional so we can load deliveries quicker, which adds to a better, more efficient service to our customers. It's been really well received so far."

April

Last day of trading in the old Flower Market

Traders, florists and customers gather to say goodbye to the old Flower Market as it celebrates its last day of trading after 43 years. The new Flower Market opened for trading on April 3 just down the road.



Above: Traders, florists and customers in the old Flower Market

April

La Compagnie des Desserts merges with Destiny Foods to expand UK portfolio

In April, La Compagnie des Desserts consolidated its business with Destiny Foods, a dessert distribution company based in Manchester, to expand its offering to customers across the UK.

The French-founded company has seen huge growth in France and Spain but was finding it difficult to crack the UK market following its move to London in 2005. Warehouse Manager Sean Kay says, "we're lucky that we're in London as it's so multicultural but we're trying to get a bit more British and cater to the entire UK, not just London."

Now, Afternoon Tea selection boxes and classics like sticky toffee pudding, originating through Destiny Foods, help to give them "a bit more of a personal touch with British people." The increase in fleets also means they're able to deliver to more areas within the UK. The investment to create a stronger UK identity seems to be working. "I'm seeing changes in the business that I've not seen in 3 years. Customers I've not seen before, orders going up. It's very promising," says Sean.

La Compagnie des Desserts supply the catering industry, including several based

on New Covent Garden Market. Its biggest sellers are the gluten-free mi-cuit (pictured below) and it supplies a wide range of vegan, gluten-free and dairy-free products, as well as artisan breads, puff pastries, quiches, and croissants.



Above: Sean Kay

from the market

April

C Best reconfigures its store with new showroom layout for the new Flower Market

When the Flower Market moved, C Best saw an opportunity to overhaul the look and layout of its unit, making the space work smarter and harder for the business. Steve Abbott, Sales Manager at C Best, says, “Grant Mitchell, the owner, looked at the move as a way to re-present what we were doing. Previously, we had a warehouse situation so we just presented everything from pallet racking. If there was space, we filled it, but it was very random. The move enabled us to rethink the presentation, spend money on a refit and work with the space to our advantage.”

The new showroom layout has been a hit with customers. “They love the presentation, the new environment, the cleanliness.

“We get more interior designers coming in now so we’ve tried to adapt to their needs whilst continuing to appeal to our florist customers. It’s about keeping a happy medium.”

The restructure helped them to tighten up internal processes, too. “We’ve introduced stock management systems and moved away from what was done in the past. It’s woken people up to the fact that man power is expensive and we need systems to enable us to be more efficient with that.” These changes have had a positive impact on the team. “We’ve still got lots to learn on the logistics side but we tweak on a weekly basis, and it’s been good because it’s made us consider more what we’re doing and why.”



Above: Steve Abbott, centre, and the C Best team

May

Side Salads sees record sales for asparagus in Spring



Top to bottom: Chef Grzegorz Olejarka, boxes of Portwood asparagus at Side Salads



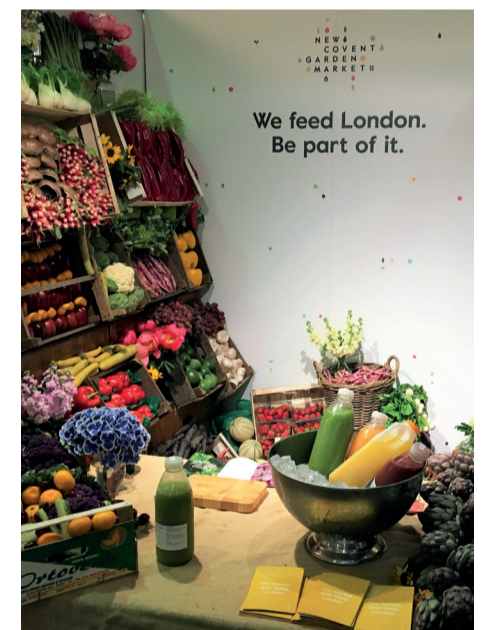
Asparagus sales at Side Salads surged again year on year after some clever repositioning by the company to make its supplier’s offer, Portwood Asparagus, a more attractive deal for buyers.

Nick Padley, Sales Manager at Side Salads, says, “Portwood used to pack boxes in bunches of 20 x 250g (5kg) which made their box price at the start of the season much higher than other brands. Most customers only wanted one or two boxes so were going for the ‘cheaper’ option, buying a competitor’s brand packed 12 x 250g (3kg).”

In order to get in the door with its customers’ early season, they adjusted Portwood’s offer, downsizing from bunches of 20 to 12 which price-matched them with the competition. They secured early buyers with its quality; once chefs tried Portwood, they stayed with it all season. “Portwood’s is a better grade, quality, and taste – we just needed to present it differently” says Nick. Asparagus sales boomed. “At one point we sold 1170kg (390 boxes) in one night.”

Side Salads held an event on the Buyers’ Walk in April to do a PR push for both the company and its supplier. They invited down Andy Allan, grower for Portwood Asparagus, to talk about the product to customers. Top chef Grzegorz Olejarka, a customer of County Supplies London, also did a cooking demonstration to highlight the diverse uses of asparagus. Nick says, “It’s promoted Andy’s name, and it’s promoted the brand. He knows what he’s doing and so much effort goes into his work.”

June



Above: New Covent Garden Market’s stand at the London Produce Show

Traders attend the London Produce Show

In June, the buzz of the London Produce Show returned to Central London. P & I Fruits and Side Salads each took a stand, with New Covent Garden Market’s eye-catching display representing the market.

There were over 100 enquiries from people keen to find out more about the market’s fantastic selection of fruit, veg and flowers, and Side Salads used the show to unveil its new venture, Fresh Produce Brokers, headed up by P & I’s David Emmett.

2017 business highlights continued

July



Above: Cassandra Thompson, centre, and attendees of her unicorn workshop

Stems UK starts running floral workshops from its Flower Market studio

Cassandra Thompson, owner of Stems UK and Frames for Florists, used the move to the new Flower Market as an opportunity to enhance her business by running floral workshops on site.

Stems UK specialise in funeral flower arrangements. Frames for Florists focus on extreme, bespoke pieces of floral art. “Both sides of the business are quite niche in this industry and our workshops have helped to promote them,” explains Cassandra. With one unit dedicated to each side of the business, it’s made the on-site workshops possible. “The new space is the

whole reason we’ve been able to do this. I’ve always wanted to teach, I’ve just not had the opportunity to launch that until now.”

The first workshop took place in July and was partly a response to industry demand, receiving interest from both florists and career-changers. Cassandra says, “people want more unusual stuff these days. I wanted a space where people could come and learn the basics, as well as the really intricate designs. We build the frames then people come to work with it. That way, if someone asks them to do it for an event, they’ve had the experience.”

August

John Connell and Le Marché combine forces to launch Le Marché Ltd

In August 2017 John Connell, one of the oldest catering companies in New Covent Garden Market, acquired Prestige Primeur. Connell and Le Marché then amalgamated to form Le Marché Ltd in September. The intention is to take Le Marché’s experience of bespoke supply and turn it into the daily service Connell were renowned for. Le Marché Ltd’s Directors Marcus Rowleron (formerly of John Connell), and Robin Dunlop and Ben Cartwright (formerly of Le Marché) see its combination of experience and innovation as the recipe to making it a new market leader.

Le Marché Ltd believes that its unique link with Paris, alongside its wealth of experience working on wholesale markets, is what sets them apart. The company

has trained up a buying team in Rungis, Paris (the world’s largest fruit and veg wholesale market) to source them fresh produce six days a week, exporting pallets back to London to supply a range of hotels and restaurants across the capital. They combine this with the best that New Covent Garden Market offers, helped by their buyer Bob King and his 40 years’ of experience.

Thanks to the dedication of their 30-strong team, Le Marché Ltd’s portfolio of export customers continues to expand. Marcus says, “we inherited a great team when Prestige joined, they’re all incredibly knowledgeable and hardworking. We have an opportunity to do something really amazing here.”



Left to right: Ben Cartwright and Marcus Rowleron

September



Above: Mike Walker at the Wild Harvest event

Wild Harvest hosts its biggest event ever at Ascot Racecourse

In September, Wild Harvest hosted its biggest event to date at Ascot Racecourse. The company took part in Sodexo Salon Culinaire, one of the largest culinary competitions in the UK. Wild Harvest invited along some of its suppliers who put on cooking demos and provided expert knowledge of their produce to attendees.

Since Mike Walker joined as new MD, in July, it has become part of a strategic business decision to invest more in these types of events. Mike says, “they’re extremely important to our business as they allow Wild Harvest to showcase amazing seasonal and exotic products, as well as building strong working relationships with our customers.”

It’s also helped increase brand awareness nationally. Lola Vilvancos, Marketing Manager at Wild Harvest, says, “customers give such positive feedback. They’re then really interested to come and visit the warehouse on New Covent Garden Market. When they do, we’ve been organising demonstrations for them in our kitchens - it’s been really beneficial to securing new business.” The company is currently investing in a new development kitchen in New Covent Garden Market which will be ready next year.

Wild Harvest were Great Taste Golden Fork Award Winners this year with their Burrata and Black Truffle Tortellini. The pasta was created specifically by the Wild Harvest and Ascot Team for Ascot Racecourse.

September

Promising partnership as Houghtons acquires T J Wholesale

In September, Houghtons of London acquired T J Wholesale, enabling both businesses to expand and creating new opportunities for T J Wholesale.

Paul Gardner, T J Wholesale's Co-Director of 27 years, says, "it's been fantastic. We've got better buying power and can now deliver further away. Before, we only had five vehicles so we were limited to where we could go – but to move on in this business and serve groups, which is what the majority of the work is, you need to be able to go everywhere."

The expansion of their collective line of fleets enables this. The merge also means more unit space and has given them an

upgrade, explains Paul. "Houghtons has the BRC, the facilities are better, we've got a prep room. We've picked up new work and are in the process of picking up two or three bigger companies in the near future."

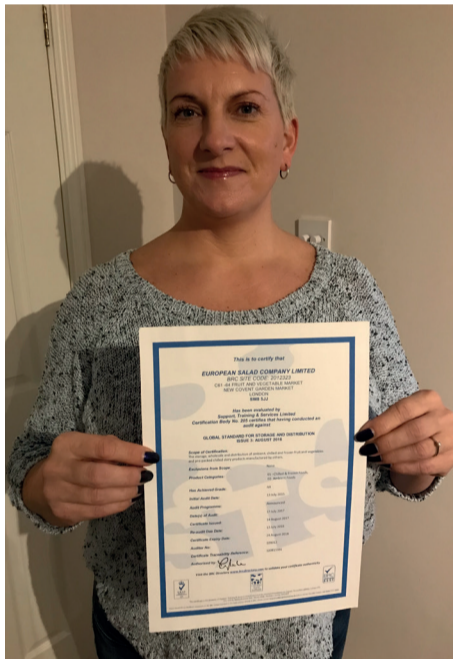
Both Houghtons and T J Wholesale share the same buyer, Paul Aylward, who was the instigator in bringing the two together. "After coming to meet with Stacey I knew there was nowhere else we were going to go," says Gardner.

Paul Gardner and Tommy Good are Co-Directors of T J Wholesale and now work alongside Stacey Houghton, Director of Houghtons.



Left to right: Paul Gardner and Paul Aylward

October



Above: Tessa Knowles of European Salad Co with the BRC certificate

Highest BRC accreditation for wholesalers

The market's wholesalers have been recognized for delivering the highest in food industry standards, as set out by the British Retail Consortium (BRC). This is the first year the BRC has introduced its new audit grading system, which means companies can now be awarded a maximum AA grade. Both Premier Fruits and European Salad Co received this grade. The French Garden and London Fresh received the BRC A grade.

Premier Fruits received the BRC for its second consecutive year. Roger Garber, Co-Director, says, "having a wholesale unit is quite unique because of the conditions. They look at everything – the stand, pallet, fruit, traceability back to suppliers..."



Left to right: Roger Garber and Jason Tanner with their BRC certificate

"Our warehouses are checked twice a day for temperature and cleanliness. It's not something you can do once a month or at the end of the year. They'll pick a certain week with a consignment produce, and they'll want to know it's been configured properly."

And it's essential for Premier's business. Jason Tanner, its Chairman, says, "to supply restaurants you need the BRC so it's more usual for caterers to have it, but our two largest customers wouldn't trade with us if we didn't have it."

European Salad Co received its BRC for the fourth consecutive year. Its buyer, Tessa

Knowles, says, "we see it as an investment in the company, and in the current competitive market this can be the real difference to attracting new customers. The BRC shows we already work to a high standard and that follows through to our supply chain, who are also certified."

BRC is the leading trade association for UK retailing and is now recognized as a global standard. It sets the benchmark for good food manufacturing practice, and provides assurance to customers that products are safe, legal and of high quality.



Above: Chris Dart of The French Garden who also received the BRC certificate

Getting to know Allison Risebro

We chat to Stuart Allison, Company Co-Director, and Andy Luff, Buyer, about their experience working at Allison Risebro, a family run business that's been going for over 40 years.



From left to right: Stuart Allison and Andy Luff



With your name above the door you've got a responsibility to your staff

"Dick and Tony started the business," says Andy, the firm's buyer of 19 years. "They're the pioneers of the catering trade, one of the first ones in here. So they've really seen some changes. They had an old post office van to start off with and about six or seven orders. It just went from there."

Flourishing business

A contract-catering business, Allison Risebro has depots on both New Covent Garden Market and Western International Market. Duncan Allison, Stuart's brother and Company Manager, is based primarily at Western where they have about ten staff members.

And it's the ethics of the business that's seen it flourish from a tenacious postoffice van duo to a 40-strong team today. "You get to a standard and you try and keep it there. That's the most difficult thing you can do, keep the standard there the whole time," says Andy. "It's about getting the gear to the customers on time. Never buying down to a price. Finding the best you can, and being fair."

The military influence

Stuart brings with him a different experience that's had positive impacts on the team. He spent 12 years in the military. "I've been able to put my skills to use here," he says. He cites strong leadership, efficiency and organisation as the core three that he brings to the business. "Stuff goes out on time. We don't have any staff issues...It's the army reputation," he jokes. "Scare the enemy!"

But he's immensely proud of the dedication of his younger team. "We've got five guys aged between 18-22 and they

come in religiously every night, and do one of the hardest jobs in this company. But like everyone else, they just get on with it."

What keeps them motivated? "Strong leadership skills. They're a human being at the end of the day. Good direction, authority, and showing them that you can do it. Lead by example. And we have. That's how I know that we do things right because the guys are still here. They're the future of the business. And I would say they are company members."

Keeping it light

Still, the more disciplinarian approach comes laced with typical market humour. "We all like to have a laugh. And we do play jokes on each other," says Andy. The banter tends to get directed at the younger members of staff. "A lot of the young guys coming in, they don't know fruit and veg. So we'll get them," says Stuart. "He'll say, *this scotch bonnet tastes just like ice cream*" says Andy, "so they take a bite out of one and then, y'know..."

This mix of hard work and play keeps people loyal. "The majority of staff we have are long term because it's a good firm to work for. We all pull together, there's good camaraderie," says Andy. "You spend more time with people on the market than you do your family, so you take on the responsibilities of the other. You've got friends on the market who've been through two divorces and you've been through it with them, you've known them so long."

Family bonds

That said, family sits at the heart of this business, and has done for years. "That's got its pros and cons, as you can well imagine," says Stuart. "Family have different ideas about how things have to be done. But the good thing about being a family is that you can trust your family. It keeps you close."

After all, Richard Risebro (a.k.a Dick) and Tony Allison were the true pioneers. "Tony's got the upmost respect not just in New Covent Garden Market but in the whole industry, as does Dick," says Andy. "They had that charisma about them. And they'd always get the work done. You need to be professional yourself when you're dealing in this industry."

Professional and pastoral care

It's that combination of professionalism and pastoral care that's filtered down from the generations who've worked here. Stuart feels a duty of care, just like his Dad.

"With your name above the door you've got a responsibility to your staff. You can't let them down. I think that's where we do well. If the staff have problems, we're all very approachable and we all respect each other" says Stuart. "One of them had a bit of a rough time at home as he lost a family member. He phoned up and said *Thank you for looking after me like my dad does. It feels like family.* That's nice – that's what you want."

The hottest fruit and veg trends for 2018

We spoke to the Fruit and Veg Market to get their take on the hottest trends in fresh produce, and what's set to continue into 2018.



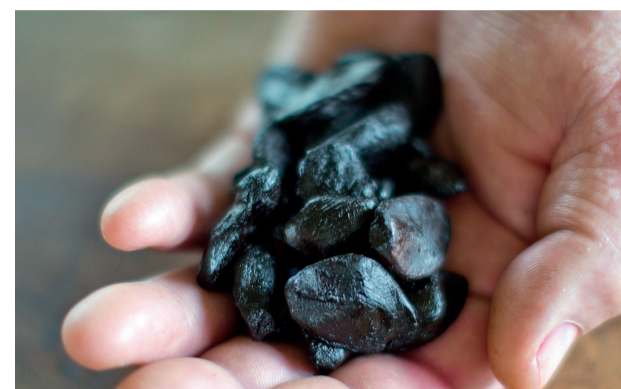
Heritage

Traders report heritage as being particularly strong in 2017 with traditional, coloured and quirky varieties in high demand e.g. heritage tomatoes, purple and yellow carrots, mixed squashes, candy-striped beetroot and traditional apples and pears. And this shows no sign of disappearing in 2018.



Unusual citrus

Customers are asking for more unusual citrus like Miyagawa clementines, Japanese Yuzu, Sudachi limes, Cedro lemons and Tangelos.



Black - the new purple

It was purple, now it's black – traders report higher demand for the likes of black sweetcorn, black garlic, black radishes and black cabbage. And the trend looks set to continue in 2018.



Kale - the star of the show this year

Baby, variegated, classic, curly, kalettes and salad kale topped the charts in 2017 and show no signs of slowing down next year. This correlates with the rising trend for healthy eating, vegetarianism and veganism that has impacted demand.



Sweet potatoes and specialist potato varieties

Sweet potatoes are gaining popularity, partly due to their high nutritional content and the rising trend for healthy eating, and wholesalers report that the 'dirty potato' and specialist varieties of the humble spud are on the increase.



Berries

Berries are in higher demand and available for longer seasons - chefs are now getting creative with the likes of alpine raspberries, aronia berries and pink blueberries.



Vegan and superfoods

This year the market is benefiting from the rise of veganism. Health trends for so called superfoods are driving demand for the likes of kale, cavolo nero, aloe vera, turmeric and berries, with reports that sales of these were on the rise.



Wonky Veg

Thanks to the war on food waste and a growing emphasis on food sustainability, imperfections sell better than ever before - and it's gaining momentum.



British provenance and seasonality

It's no surprise that wholesalers report their customers' preference for all things seasonal, British and locally grown. This trend looks set to continue in 2018, too.

Well-seasoned vs fresh faced: the market



The quality of flowers now is the best it's ever been

We get a glimpse of the market through the eyes of one of our most seasoned traders, Dennis Edwards, 68, who works at Dennis Edwards Flowers in the Flower Market.



How long have you worked on this market?

51 years. I've done every job that you can on the market. Night man, day man, buyer, salesman. I came in for one year to then go into the fruit market but I liked it so much I stayed – 51 years! Back then, the fruit market was a very strong union, your boss was your enemy. In the Flower Market you worked *with* your boss, which I liked.

What did you start off doing?

I was a day porter. My job was to take the customers' goods to their vehicles, which could be anywhere from the Strand all the way up to Long Acre (in the original Covent Garden Market). I was also looking after the stock and generally keeping the stand clean and tidy.

What's your earliest memory of the market?

It was hard work in the old place, too small for the traffic. I saw a porter crushed to death by a lorry in Long Acre when I was 17. We had to move from the old place.

How has the market changed over the years?

Unfortunately, we have lost a lot of English growers. There was a hell of a lot 40 years ago. But the quality of flowers now is the best it's ever been. We get six day a week deliveries. Years ago, it took two or three days from Holland and you had to order in advance. Now it's a lot easier. I can take an order with confidence and supply it the next day. The Dutch take care of all the paperwork now, which makes exporting a lot easier. And if my Dutch suppliers see anything new and unusual they can buy it for me.

If I don't like it, I won't knock it off the bill. I give 'em a bit of scope, a bit of licence y'know. I've been buying with them for nearly 40 years.

What's your favourite thing about the market?

It's different every day. There's loads of banter with colleagues, we're in opposition but most of the time it's friendly and we help each other if we can.

What's kept you committed all these years?

Like I say, it's different every day. We had a couple come in the old market who said, "Can you get us some roses?" I said, "Yes, how many would you like?" They said, "60,000." I nearly fell over. They were for the Patron Saint of Roses whose relics were on a world-wide tour, and the roses were being sold by the Cathedral to lay by the relics. That's probably the biggest single order I've ever had.

We supplied Lily of the Valley for William and Kate's wedding. I also supplied the rose petals for the 9/11 service at St. Paul's – very touching. I've arranged flowers to be delivered for weddings and parties in France, Italy, Spain, Poland, even the USA. We can get a Bar Mitzvah with a £100k budget. You never know what's going to come through the door.

What's something you can share about the market that nobody else would know?

There's a guy who used to work in the old Flower Market, Bert. Very quiet, unassuming man. I found out later, after

he finished, that he'd made the most escapes from Colditz Prison. You'd never dream it.

And also, the porters. Have you noticed now there's maybe 10 or 12 porters? But there used to be about 80. It used to be like blackmail, them saying only they could use the trollies. They used to block people coming down early in the morning. It was a real bad time but there's been progress. The Danish trollies, the narrow ones, they weren't available years ago but they've changed the way the market runs in a big, big way. They're a lot easier to take things in and out.

If you could be remembered for one thing what would it be?

I like to think that, in my prime, I'd take a risk with everything. Anything new, I like to try it if I can. And when someone gives me an order I'll always do my utmost to get them what they want at the price they want.

If you could be any flower what would you be and why?

My granddaughters are called Poppy and Violet so I always say those are my favourite two flowers. Poppies have been my favourite for years. You sell so many flowers they always stand out from others, the poppies.

through two different lenses



You can't work at the market just for the money, you have to love it

We get a glimpse of the market through the eyes of a fresher faced trader, Aneesh Ajayakhosh, 28, who works at The French Garden in the Fruit and Veg Market.

How long have you worked in the market?

I started in French Garden nearly seven years ago. I came to work here after university.

What did you start off doing?

One of my friends called me up for the job. I didn't know anything about the market at first and I found it really hard to speak English. They gave me a job here at the back. I started doing loading and unpacking with the boys, and then eventually they started asking me to check the orders. They'd give me sections to start off with like a fruit or veg, and I'd start learning all the size and weights of everything. And then I'd learn prices. Someone would ask "how much is that?" and they'd realise I knew. I'd worked here nearly 3 years doing stuff around the back so I knew the product, the prices, the seasons. Now, seven years later, I'm a salesman.

What's your favourite thing about the market?

When customers come and ask all these questions about the product, and want me to explain things. They've never really seen this stuff before. And every week there's laughing and joking. We have good friendships here, it's a good laugh. You can't work at the market just for the money, you have to love it because of its timings. If it's just about money, you'll find somewhere else. I like to physically be busy, too.

What's the biggest challenge?

Prices can change daily but we have to let the customer know and it might not just be one item, it could be a lot - 50 of the 200 lines we sell can have different prices that fluctuate daily. Sometimes, the customer will cancel the order. Currency has the biggest impact, and the weather. There's no predictability.

What's kept you committed to the job?

The team feels like a family. If I'm in a bad situation personally, they'll always stand up with me, say "no problem, we can sort it." They never talk to me like they're my boss or nothing. We're a team. We never say "I do this" it's "we do this".

My family are in South-India still, they don't like to come here because it's too cold! I used to go back home to celebrate Christmas but last year, Nathan (Director at The French Garden) took me to his house to celebrate with them. Everyone here always asks me "what you doing for Christmas this year?" Chris (Director at The French Garden) took me one year and drove me all the way home - he didn't drink any champagne that day! These guys are like my family.

What's the most stressful part of the job?

Mainly the busy peak times. Sometimes we can't fulfil the order for what the customer needs, like the stuff goes short, and you have to call to tell them. Or sometimes you take the order and there's not enough stuff and you're running around trying to find it elsewhere. It can be stressful. We say to some of the others here, "Can we borrow a couple of boxes of that and we'll replace it the next day?" And you've got the landline ringing, the mobile ringing, people then asking why aren't you picking one of them up!

How has the market changed over the years?

The only change I can see are the working hours in the market. Customers would come from 9.30-10am to buy. But now they've changed their timings and the market timing has changed. We used to stay till 11am - now everyone's packed up before 9am.

If you could be any fruit or veg what would you be and why?

A strawberry because everyone likes a strawberry. It's like a love heart! And the first time I ate a strawberry was when I came to this country.

We'd love to hear from you

What did you think of Issue 03?
It would be great to get your feedback.

And if there's something you'd like to
share or see featured in our next quarterly
newsletter, just let Charlotte know.
It's your news and your stories.

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Above: Christmas trees on the Flower Market, November