

MORE THAN ONLY  
**FOOD &  
DRINK**



# A TASTE OF EXCELLENCE

Unlocking the Value of  
EU Food & Drink for UK Markets



EUROPEAN UNION

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EUROPE





# Welcome



“

European producers are setting global standards for sustainability, safety, and authenticity. At a time when consumers demand more from what they eat and drink, EU food and beverage products offer reassurance, responsibility, and remarkable quality.

**Christophe Hansen**  
European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food

Dear Reader,

The European Union's food and beverage sector is one of the most diverse and high-quality in the world. Across 27 Member States, a wealth of products – some globally recognised, others waiting to be discovered – showcase the continent's rich culinary heritage, commitment to excellence, and drive for innovation. While well-known European products already have a strong presence in the UK, there remains untapped potential in the form of lesser-known yet exceptional food and drink offerings that can provide UK businesses with a competitive edge.

This book is published as part of the 'More than Only Food & Drink' UK campaign, which promotes the best of European food and drink on the UK market. Through trade exhibitions, specialised seminars, roundtables, and innovation showcases, the campaign highlights 'hidden hero' products and fosters business opportunities between EU producers and UK buyers. From distinctive cheeses and artisan spirits to sustainably sourced meats, these hidden treasures offer exciting opportunities for retailers, wholesalers, and food service professionals.

## Why EU Food and Drink?

The EU's food and beverage sector is a powerhouse of excellence, shaped by a commitment to innovation, diversity, and sustainability.

Food and beverage producers in the EU are constantly evolving, responding to shifting consumer demands with cutting-edge developments.

The extraordinary variety of products available across the continent reflects Europe's diverse climates, regional specialities, and rich culinary traditions waiting to be discovered by UK buyers. These products offer unique flavours, compelling stories, and exciting business opportunities.

Strict EU regulations underpin the reputation for excellence that European products enjoy. Rigorous quality standards ensure that everything from traditional cheeses to unique beverages meets the highest levels of safety and authenticity. Designations such as PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) provide reassurance to businesses and consumers alike, guaranteeing the origin, heritage, and superior quality of European products.

Many of these foods and beverages are deeply rooted in tradition, with production methods that have been carefully passed down through generations. Their authenticity adds a compelling dimension for businesses looking to offer customers a true taste of Europe's cultural heritage. Products with a strong sense of place and history resonate with today's consumers, who increasingly seek authenticity and traceability in their food choices.

Equally important is the EU's leadership in food safety and sustainability. The EU enforces some of the world's strictest regulations, ensuring that products reaching the consumer are subject to rigorous controls. At the same time, sustainability initiatives reinforce the EU's position as a responsible and forward-thinking producer. These high standards not only protect consumers but also align with the growing demand for ethical and sustainable food choices.

## Unlocking New Opportunities

This book explores how you can leverage the diversity and quality of European Union food and drink. It provides market insights on seasonal and regional demand patterns, highlights how EU products can be integrated into restaurant menus, retail offerings and distribution portfolios, and examines the evolving preferences of UK consumers.

One of the book's key aims is to act as a directory – highlighting lesser-known European products that have significant potential in the UK market. Whether it's a unique smoked cheese, a rare herbal liqueur, or sustainably farmed meat, these undiscovered gems can offer retailers, chefs, and distributors new opportunities.

To bring these products to life, we profile selected European producers from different EU regions, showcasing their expertise, dedication to quality, and innovative approaches. These stories reinforce the central message of this book: the EU is home to extraordinary food and drink products for consumers to discover.

On behalf of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) of the European Commission, I invite you to explore the following pages and discover the wealth of opportunities that European food and drink can offer.

Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)  
European Commission



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# Key Attributes of EU Food & Beverages

## Beyond Taste:

## What Makes European Food & Drink Exceptional

Standing as a testament to quality, tradition, and continuous innovation, food and beverages from the EU exemplify excellence. Across the diverse regions of the EU – from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea – producers draw upon centuries-old knowledge while embracing cutting-edge innovations to create an unparalleled range of high-value products.

At the heart of this book is an exploration of how European producers seamlessly blend innovation with sustainability, quality, safety, diversity, and authenticity to deliver products that are aligned with consumer preferences. These pillars define the EU's approach to food and beverage production:

## Innovation

The EU's food and beverage industry is constantly evolving, driven by innovation in farming practices, advanced production methods such as vertical farming and controlled-environment agriculture, sustainable packaging, and smart labelling. For UK consumers, this means access to an expanding range of innovative products benefiting from agricultural techniques that enhance sustainability, efficiency, and quality. From dairy and meat products produced using precision farming to sustainably harvested fruits and vegetables, innovation is unlocking exciting opportunities across multiple food categories, delivering exceptional taste, freshness, and quality to meet consumer expectations.

## Quality

EU food is celebrated for its exceptional quality, safeguarded by strict safety and sustainability standards. Across the Union, farmers and producers combine tradition with innovation to craft delicious, nutritious products. Rigorous measures are in place to ensure authenticity and combat food fraud, guaranteeing that EU products in the UK market consistently deliver superior taste and a quality that consumers can trust.

## Safety

The EU enforces some of the world's strictest food safety regulations,<sup>1</sup> ensuring rigorous quality controls at every stage of production. For UK businesses and consumers, this means access to products that meet consistently high standards. Our stringent animal and plant health regulations, coupled with advanced disease control approaches, maintain the integrity of our food supply.

## Authenticity & Tradition

Many EU food and beverage products reflect the rich heritage and expertise of the regions they come from. Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) and Protected Designations of Origin (PDO)<sup>2</sup> not only link products to their specific regions and unique histories but also guarantee their authenticity, ensuring that production, processing, and preparation occur within the designated areas. This certification safeguards traditional methods and upholds quality standards, allowing UK consumers to enjoy genuine products that reflect the cultural and historical essence of their origin.

## Diversity

Diversity is one of the EU's greatest strengths. The continent's varied climates, fertile soils, and distinct cultural traditions create ideal conditions for producing an exceptional range of food and drink. This diversity enables UK businesses to source high-quality ingredients and products that cater to evolving consumer preferences, ensuring a wide selection of choices throughout the year.

## Sustainability

Environmental responsibility is a key focus of EU food production. Producers are committed to reducing the use of pesticides and antimicrobials, promoting organic farming, and improving animal welfare. Many also prioritise sustainable farming practices, eco-friendly packaging, food waste reduction, and biodiversity protection initiatives, while actively working to lower their carbon footprint.

In the following pages, we will take a closer look at these defining attributes. Through a variety of product examples, you'll discover the rich diversity of European offerings, from time-honoured specialties to cutting-edge innovations. This chapter also sets the stage for the producer profiles and product spotlights later in the book, where you'll find real-world examples of the craftsmanship and excellence that make EU food and beverages stand out.

## A Mark of Distinction: PDO, PGI & Organic Labels Explained



Amarone della Valpolicella PDO, Italy



### PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN

**PDO** certification is awarded to products that have the strongest ties to their place of origin. Every stage of production, processing, and preparation must occur within a specific region, preserving the integrity of traditional methods. Food, wine, and agricultural products can all be labelled PDO. For wines, this means that 100% of the grapes must come from the designated geographical area, ensuring an authentic taste that reflects the region's unique terroir. For example, Amarone della Valpolicella PDO from Italy is a rich red wine made from partially dried grapes grown exclusively in the Valpolicella region of the Veneto province. This method intensifies its complex flavours and ensures a deep connection to its regional heritage. Meanwhile, Wrångebäckssost PDO cheese from Sweden is a semi-hard cow's milk cheese offering a tangy aroma and complex umami flavour. The cheese is produced entirely within the region of Almnäs Bruk, with milk sourced exclusively from local herds.

### PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

**PGI** recognises products whose distinct qualities, reputation, or characteristics are closely linked to their geographic origin. For PGI products, at least one stage of production, processing, or preparation must take place in the specified region. In the case of wine, this means that a minimum of 85% of the grapes must originate from the designated area, maintaining a strong connection between the product and its heritage. For example, Pays d'Oc PGI, a wine from France's Languedoc-Roussillon region, offers a diverse range of varietals, known for their rich fruit flavours and spice, that meet strict quality specifications. Likewise, Kielbasa lisiecka PGI from Poland is a lean, mildly smoked sausage with a nutty flavour, produced exclusively in the municipalities of Liszki and Czernichów, in the Kraków district, although the meat may be sourced from other regions.



Kielbasa lisiecka PGI, Poland

### ORGANIC LABEL

## The EU Organic Label



The EU Organic Label is an official certification that assures consumers of a product's compliance with stringent organic farming standards. To qualify, products must adhere to specific regulations, including the use of organic feed for farm animals, a complete prohibition of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and strict limitations on the use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, and antibiotics. Additionally, a product can only carry this label if its ingredients are at least 95% organically farmed, with the remaining 5% meeting additional strict conditions. For example, organic, GMO-free farming practices are helping to promote biodiversity and support sustainable farming across Europe — including for producers exporting to international markets like the UK.



Organic Lammejord carrots, Denmark



## Pioneering Excellence:

# Innovations in the EU Food & Beverage Sector

In the EU, food is deeply tied to identity, tradition, and community, making sustainability efforts a delicate endeavour. Yet beyond its rich heritage, European food is also forward-looking, embracing innovation to meet the challenges of a changing world. Reflecting this balance between tradition and progress, EU policy emphasises the creation of an enabling environment where research, innovation, knowledge, and skills are central to the agri-food economy – ensuring benefits for both producers and the planet.

### New Product Development Catering to UK Tastes

Understanding consumer preferences, EU producers are innovating to offer products that align with current trends. For example, the development of crisps flavoured with Italian **Prosecco PDO** combines the indulgence of crisps with the sophisticated flair of Prosecco, offering consumers a new and luxurious snacking experience. Meanwhile, EU dairy companies are conducting research<sup>3</sup> into lactose-free and digestion-improving foodstuffs. These product innovations provide UK consumers with access to a wide range of novel food choices, demonstrating the EU's commitment to meeting evolving tastes while honouring tradition.

### Driving Sustainability Through Innovation

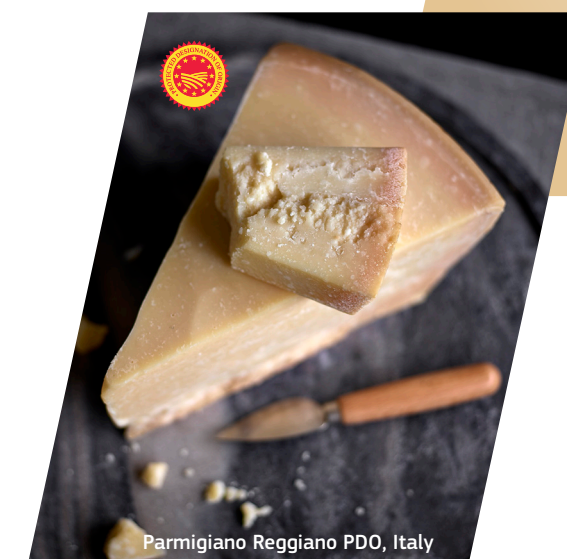
Innovative practices, including advanced farming methods, digital agriculture, and AI-driven supply chains, are reducing resource use and emissions while preserving quality and tradition. Additionally, European producers are pioneering sustainable packaging solutions, such as compostable bioplastics derived from agricultural by-products, contributing to a circular economy.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, innovations in plant breeding are accelerating the development of climate-change resilient, resource-saving, nutritious, and high-yielding varieties. These innovations are opening new business models that reward both farmers and nature, contributing to a win-win transition that supports competitiveness.

### Advancements in Food Technology

The European Union is harnessing innovation to enhance sustainability in traditional food categories. Cutting-edge techniques, such as precision farming, are helping farmers optimise the use of natural resources, reducing water consumption, fertilisers, and pesticides while maintaining productivity. Meanwhile, advancements in meat and dairy processing, for example, including high-pressure processing and innovative cold-chain logistics, are improving food safety, extending shelf life, and preserving quality without compromising tradition or authenticity. These innovations reflect the EU's leadership in ethical and responsible food production, and align with UK consumers' expectations for sustainably produced, high-quality products.

### Harmonising Tradition with Innovation

As we have seen, the EU guards its rich culinary heritage with PDO and PGI labels, underscoring its commitment to quality and authenticity. However, producers are going further – embracing innovation within these frameworks to meet modern consumer demands without compromising their heritage. For instance, **Parmigiano Reggiano PDO** producers in Italy are combating counterfeiting by embedding microchips into the cheese rinds. These microchips, smaller than a grain of salt, serve as digital identifiers, allowing for tracking and authentication throughout the supply chain.



Parmigiano Reggiano PDO, Italy



### Empowering Farmers Through Innovation Networks

Innovation in the EU food and beverage sector goes beyond technological advancements – it is about ensuring that new knowledge and solutions reach those who need them most. European networks such as SmartAgriHubs<sup>5</sup> and the EU CAP Network<sup>6</sup> play a crucial role in connecting farmers, researchers, and businesses, ensuring that cutting-edge agricultural innovations are accessible and applicable. For instance, the EIP-AGRI Focus Group on reducing food loss on the farm has facilitated initiatives like the AgroCycle Marketplace,<sup>7</sup> a platform developed to valorise agricultural waste into valuable products, such as bio-based packaging materials. This not only enhances sustainability but also leads to the development of innovative food packaging solutions that can be widely adopted, including in the UK market. By fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange in this way, the EU is not only driving innovation but also ensuring that its benefits are shared widely across the food system.

By embracing advancements in food technology and new product development, EU producers continue to deliver high-quality, authentic, and sustainable products that cater to the discerning and evolving tastes of consumers. This synergy of tradition and innovation offers businesses the opportunity to align their offerings with customer preferences, ensuring they stay competitive in the UK's dynamic food and beverage market.





## KEY ATTRIBUTES OF EU FOOD & BEVERAGES



Feta PDO, Greece



Fromage de Herve PDO, Belgium



Telemea de Ibănești PDO, Romania



Slovenská bryndza PGI, Slovakia



Olomoucké tvarůžky PGI, Czechia



Danablu PGI, Denmark

Diverse, Authentic, Exceptional:

# The EU Food & Drink Advantage

EU farmers and producers offer an irresistible tapestry of premium products. For the UK food and beverage sector, this represents an opportunity to redefine menus and retail aisles with standout offerings to attract conscientious consumers. By embracing the wide range of high-quality goods that farmers and producers across the EU have to offer, businesses can tap into a diverse world where heritage meets innovation, ensuring they stay ahead in the marketplace.

## Subtle Regional Differences

The EU's rich landscapes and cultural heritage have shaped an exceptional array of regional specialities. While consumers are already familiar with staples like French cheese, Italian pasta, and Spanish wine, the varied soils and climatic conditions of Europe's farms offer many more treasures, with subtle differences in production conditions resulting in unique products for

UK consumers to discover. For example, Greece's briny **Feta PDO**, Romania's creamy **Telemea de Ibănești PDO**, and Bulgaria's crumbly **Bulgarsko byalo salamureno sirene PDO** are cheeses that all share a pastoral heritage, yet each bears distinct textures and flavours forged by local breeds, production methods, and microclimates. For UK buyers, these regional gems offer more than novelty – they tap into growing demand for authenticity and storytelling.

## Tradition Meets Innovation

European farmers and producers are dedicated to preserving traditional methods while embracing innovation, offering a diverse array of authentic, quality products that reflect the continent's rich culinary heritage. For example, the **Lapin Puikula PDO** is a unique Finnish potato variety from Lapland that is celebrated for its firm texture and slightly nutty taste. Thanks to modern cultivation methods, such as precision agriculture, producers are able to cultivate higher-quality potatoes that thrive in harsh Nordic conditions. Additionally, the integration of digital technologies has improved efficiency and sustainability in local food systems, ensuring the quality and availability of this traditional variety.

**Olomoucké tvarůžky PGI**, a soft cheese with a distinctive aroma from Czechia, is crafted using time-honoured fermentation methods while benefiting from state-of-the-art quality controls that enhance consistency and shelf life. In Denmark, **Danablu PGI**, also known as Danish Blue Cheese, owes its unique nutty aroma with a hint of marzipan to traditional mould cultures, yet modern precision ageing techniques allow producers to refine flavour development while maintaining artisanal character.

UK food professionals recognise the strength of EU products in terms of heritage and variety.<sup>8</sup> Positioning the EU as a benchmark for quality – thanks to its support for small-scale, artisanal producers and rigorous food standards – can help UK businesses tap into growing consumer interest in these traceable products. Research by organisations such as the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)<sup>9</sup> shows that UK consumers value transparency, provenance, and craft in their food choices. While the AHDB research primarily focuses on UK agriculture, these values also align closely with the EU's production methods, especially its support for artisanal producers and high food standards.

## Meeting UK Market Demands

The UK market is characterised by a growing appreciation for provenance, authenticity, and sustainability – all qualities embodied by EU farmers and producers. Take cheese, for example: the EU offers over a thousand varieties with different textures and tastes, including soft, semi-soft, firm, blue-veined, and fresh. Each product has its own unique story, so highlighting the influence of Alpine pastures on mountain cheeses or the role of distinct dairy breeds in Corsica and Sardinia can further engage demanding consumers.

EU wines, which make up a significant share of UK imports, also offer exciting opportunities. While classics like **Champagne PDO** from France and **Rioja PDO** from Spain remain staples, the rising interest in lesser-known regional varietals and organic wines allows UK buyers to explore new options, such as grape varieties from Bulgaria and Greece, which are becoming more popular. The EU's focus on sustainability – from vineyard to glass – adds further value, aligning with consumer demand for responsible sourcing.



Rioja PDO, Spain



Lapin Puikula PDO, Finland

## The EU Advantage: A Unified Yet Diverse Offering

The EU's ability to unite diverse regional products while maintaining authenticity and quality is a major advantage. From bakery and confectionery – such as the Netherlands' syrupy stroopwafels or Germany's dense, seed-packed breads, to wine, cheese, and charcuterie – European products offer an unmatched breadth of options. By sourcing from the EU, UK food professionals gain access to an unparalleled range of high-quality products, backed by stringent standards and sustainability commitments.



## EU Food & Drink: Quality Assured

Farmers and producers across the EU are invested in the quality, safety, and authenticity of the food and drink products they produce. These principles are embedded in the very fabric of EU food production, ensuring that every product reflects the highest standards of excellence. Through a combination of stringent regulations, traditional craftsmanship, and modern innovation, EU food and drink products have earned a reputation for consistency and exceptional quality.

### Rigorous Standards for Quality and Safety

At the heart of EU food and drink quality lies a robust regulatory framework<sup>10</sup> that guarantees safety, consistency, and traceability. The EU operates some of the world's most stringent food safety standards. Every stage of production is closely monitored to meet the highest standards, ensuring that food products are safe for consumers and of the best possible quality. Whether it's ensuring accurate labelling of the nutritional content of produce or controlling the conditions under which meat is reared, the EU's regulatory processes are designed to safeguard both the health of consumers and the environment.



### Traditional Methods and Regional Expertise

One of the most distinctive features of EU food and drink is its deep-rooted connection to tradition. The EU is home to diverse agricultural and culinary regions, each with its own unique production methods that have been perfected over generations. The traditions behind many products, from centuries-old cheesemaking processes in France to artisanal bread-baking techniques in Italy, are testament to these regions' enduring commitment to quality and authenticity.

These traditional methods are preserved through quality certifications, ensuring that the products are made with expertise, care, and respect for local customs. The importance of such practices cannot be overstated, as they contribute not only to the taste and authenticity of products but also to their uniqueness in the global market. The EU's Vision for Agriculture and Food<sup>11</sup> highlights the essential role that rural areas play in fostering quality food production, reinforcing the economic and cultural significance of these traditional methods.

### Quality Control Measures and Trusted Labels

The EU's quality assurance schemes – PDO and PGI, and the Organic label – serve as trusted markers of authenticity and quality. PDO products such as **Ennstaler Steirerkas PDO**, a piquant and spicy sour milk cheese from the district of Liezen in Austria, or **Banski kestenov med PDO**, a distinctive chestnut honey from Croatia renowned for its deep amber colour and robust, slightly bitter flavour profile, which sets it apart from other honey varieties, must be produced in specific regions using traditional methods.

PGIs like **Alho da Graciosa PGI**, a subtly fragrant garlic grown on Portugal's volcanic Azores Islands, or **Vadehavslam PGI**, a salt-meadow lamb grazed on nutrient-rich grasses in Denmark's Wadden Sea region, allow slight flexibility in sourcing but guarantee geographical ties. Meanwhile, the Organic label not only signifies pesticide-limited production but also promotes biodiversity and soil health. The EU continues to encourage the uptake of geographical indications (GIs) as a powerful tool for European producers to valorise their food and drink products and preserve their food heritage.

Labels help to create a narrative around a product. For UK professionals, these logos simplify sourcing decisions, offering assurance that products meet verified criteria. A **Cornish pasty PGI** from the UK and its EU counterparts share this ethos – both are stories of place, quality, and tradition.

### The Value of EU Products in the UK Market

UK food professionals and consumers alike recognise EU food and drink products for their consistency and trustworthiness. From the high-quality standards of EU wines and cheeses to the diversity of European bakery and confectionery, these products offer a broad range of flavours, textures, and nutritional values that are in high demand in the UK market, due to consumer trust in their quality.

### A Partnership Built on Trust

For the UK food market, the EU isn't just a supplier, it's a partner. The bloc's harmonised standards, regional diversity, and commitment to sustainability provide a foundation for culinary creativity and consumer trust. When exploring lesser-known gems like **Latvijas lielie pelēkie zirņi PDO**, a soft and floury pea variety from Latvia, access to EU certifications provides a clear message: EU quality is non-negotiable.



## Authenticity:

## The Tradition-based Heart of EU Food &amp; Drink

Rooted in tradition and protected by stringent certification, authentic food and drink products from Europe's diverse regions offer UK consumers access to genuine culinary experiences. EU policy reinforces the connection between food, territory, seasonality, cultures, and traditions as central to the European way of life. This approach not only preserves regional craftsmanship but also supports consumer interest in provenance and transparency. Research from the Food Standards Agency<sup>12</sup> has shown that UK consumers increasingly value clear origin information and story-rich backgrounds, factors closely tied to the authenticity of EU food and drink.



Gbejna tan-nagħaġ PDO, Malta

Geographical Indications:  
Guardians of Authenticity

At the heart of Europe's rich culinary heritage are its farmers and producers, who uphold traditional methods passed down through generations. The EU's Quality Schemes of Geographical Indications (GI) play a crucial role in supporting these custodians of tradition. These labels not only safeguard products linked to specific regions and traditional production methods but also ensure that the knowledge and skills of local farmers are recognised and preserved, helping to maintain the authenticity and quality of Europe's diverse agricultural products. Around 4,000 product names<sup>13</sup> are registered under these schemes, underscoring the EU's dedication to protecting its culinary heritage.

A PDO label signifies that a product's quality or characteristics are exclusively due to its geographical environment, encompassing natural and human factors. For instance, **Gbejna tan-nagħaġ PDO**, small round cheeses traditionally made from sheep's milk, must be produced, processed, and prepared in Malta, adhering to traditional methods passed down through generations. The production process involves curdling fresh sheep's milk with rennet, then shaping the curds in small baskets made of dried reeds or plastic. The cheeses are then left to set and can be enjoyed in various forms:

- **Fresh (friski or tal-ilma):** These have a smooth texture and a mild, milky flavour, often kept in their own whey.
- **Air-dried (moxxa, bajda, or t'Għawdex):** These are dried in well-ventilated rooms, developing a firmer texture and a more pronounced, nutty taste.
- **Peppered and pickled (tal-bżar):** After air-drying, these cheeses are coated in crushed black pepper and cured, then stored in oil or pickled in vinegar. This method enhances preservation and imparts a sharp, piquant flavour that intensifies with ageing, resulting in a crumbly texture.

Similarly, the PGI label indicates that a product possesses a specific quality, reputation, or other characteristics attributable to its geographical origin, with at least one stage of production occurring in the region. An example is **Liptovské droby PGI** from Slovakia, a traditional sausage renowned for its distinctive blend of potatoes, pork, and aromatic spices, embodying the rich culinary heritage of the Liptov region. The meticulous production process, passed down through generations, ensures that each bite offers a harmonious blend of textures and flavours, reflecting the authentic taste of Slovakia's gastronomic traditions.

## Authenticity as a Unique Selling Point

UK consumers are increasingly seeking products that offer genuine experiences and a sense of connection to their origins.<sup>14</sup> Authentic EU food and beverage products cater to this demand by providing items with unique stories and heritage. The narratives behind these products add value and differentiate them in a crowded marketplace.

The validity and tradition of EU agri-food products are deeply rooted in the dedication of European farmers and producers, who uphold age-old techniques and sustainable practices passed down through generations. This commitment ensures that each product not only meets the highest quality standards but also retains these flavours, textures, and characteristics that define their regional specialties, offering UK consumers a genuine connection to their origins.

By sourcing these EU food products, UK businesses can offer their customers more than just exceptional taste; they provide a story, a tradition, and a piece of cultural heritage. They encapsulate the true essence of their regions, allowing consumers to savour the distinct and rich flavours that have been honed over centuries.



Liptovské droby PGI, Slovakia



# EU Food & Drink: The Safety Gold Standard



The EU maintains some of the most stringent food and beverage safety standards<sup>15</sup> globally, ensuring that products produced by dedicated farmers and producers across the Union are safe for consumers. Furthermore, the EU's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)<sup>16</sup> ensures the timely exchange of information between member countries, enabling swift action by food safety authorities in the event of risks to public health resulting from the food chain. This rigorous framework provides UK businesses and consumers with confidence in the quality and safety of EU food and beverage imports.

## A Comprehensive Safety Framework

The EU's food safety framework is built on scientific risk assessment, preventative measures, and strict enforcement. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) plays a central role in evaluating risks related to food and feed, ensuring that products entering the market are free from harmful substances and contaminants. From pesticide residues to additives and foodborne pathogens, every aspect of food production is scrutinised to guarantee consumer protection. For instance, in the dairy industry, safety measures are in place to monitor levels of hormones, chemical residues, and microbiological contamination, ensuring that milk and dairy products are safe for consumption. Additionally, stringent temperature controls, such as maintaining milk at consistently low temperatures throughout cheese production, prevent contamination and ensure hygiene standards are upheld.

## Traceability and Transparency

Traceability is a cornerstone of EU food safety. Every food item must be traceable through all phases of production, processing, and distribution. Such a system allows for rapid response in the event of a safety issue, enabling affected products to be quickly identified and removed from the market. For example, if a batch of cheese is found to be contaminated, the traceability system ensures that the specific batch can be traced back to its source, and all affected products can be efficiently recalled.

Labelling regulations further enhance transparency, providing UK buyers and consumers with clear information on ingredients, allergens, and nutritional content. This allows consumers to make informed choices, whether selecting a bottle of Slovenian olive oil or a block of Estonian cheese.

## Stringent Hygiene and Quality Standards

The EU enforces strict hygiene standards across all sectors of food production. Processing facilities, farms, and distribution centres must comply with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles, ensuring systematic monitoring of potential risks. Hygiene rules govern everything from equipment sterilisation to worker health, making certain that every step of production meets the highest standards.

For instance, in meat processing plants, regular inspections are conducted to ensure that hygiene standards are maintained, and any potential contamination risks are identified and mitigated. This includes monitoring the cleanliness of equipment, the health of workers, and the handling and storage of meat products.

## Safe Packaging, Safe Food

Beyond hygiene, packaging regulations play a vital role in food safety. The EU is at the forefront of developing innovative packaging solutions that enhance food safety. A notable example is the advancement of antimicrobial packaging,<sup>17</sup> which incorporates substances that inhibit the growth of bacteria and fungi on food surfaces. This technology not only extends the shelf life of perishable items but also significantly reduces the risk of foodborne illnesses.

What's more, food manufacturers across the EU must adhere to Good Manufacturing Practices to guarantee the consistency and safety of the food they produce. These measures reflect the EU's commitment to maintaining the highest standards in food safety, providing UK businesses and consumers with confidence in the quality and integrity of EU food products.

## Building Trust with UK Businesses and Consumers

The EU's safety regulations offer UK businesses a competitive advantage, providing reassurance that imported products meet some of the most demanding food standards in the world. Restaurants, retailers, and distributors can confidently source from Europe, knowing that these products have been rigorously tested for quality and compliance.

While the UK upholds very high food safety standards, it is not self-sufficient in food. The vast range of agricultural products available in the EU can provide reassurance and high-quality alternatives to help fill stock gaps. For consumers, this means that every bite of EU food and every sip of EU beverage reflects an uncompromising commitment to safety. This dedication to food safety isn't just a regulatory requirement – it's a promise of excellence that businesses and consumers can depend on.





# Safeguarding the Future: A Commitment to Sustainability

Sustainability is at the heart of the European food and beverage sector, with farmers and producers dedicated to ensuring that products are responsibly sourced, produced, and delivered. With growing consumer demand in the UK for environmentally responsible products, the EU stands out for its leadership in sustainable agriculture, ethical supply chains, and innovative green solutions. From regenerative farming practices to eco-friendly packaging and carbon-footprint reduction, sustainability is a defining attribute of EU food and drink.

To further streamline reporting and reduce administrative burdens for farmers, the EU is developing innovative tools that support the adoption of sustainable practices. These initiatives provide valuable data for better benchmarking and financing opportunities, demonstrating the EU's commitment to sustainability.

## Sustainable Farming: Nurturing the Land

The EU prioritises responsible sourcing by safeguarding natural resources such as soil, air, and water. The EU places strong emphasis on significantly reducing reliance on synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, actively encouraging organic farming practices and sustainable agricultural methods to protect biodiversity and safeguard environmental health. The European

Commission is looking to incentivise and support farming practices that function within planetary boundaries, while preserving healthy soils, clean water and air, and protecting and restoring Europe's biodiversity. These measures not only benefit the environment but also align with UK consumer expectations<sup>18</sup> for ethically produced food.



Jabłka grójeckie PGI, Poland

## Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence

The EU's Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence<sup>19</sup> is all about making businesses more responsible. It requires companies to spot and tackle potential human rights violations and environmental risks in their operations and supply chains. By enforcing high sustainability standards, this legislation boosts transparency and accountability. The EU's Agri Sustainability Compass<sup>20</sup> streamlines sustainability reporting and reduces the administrative burden on farmers, while supporting them in gradually adopting more sustainable practices.

## Eco-Friendly Packaging and Waste Reduction

Sustainability extends beyond production to packaging and waste management. EU producers are reducing plastic waste by adopting biodegradable, compostable, and recyclable materials. The EU aims to reduce food and packaging waste while promoting sustainable alternatives. UK consumers increasingly prefer brands that minimise environmental impact, making EU products an attractive option.

## Driving Innovation for a Greener Future

Sustainability in the EU's Food & Beverage (F&B) sector is continually evolving through research and innovation. The EU invests in precision agriculture, sustainable logistics, and energy-efficient production methods to reduce emissions and resource consumption. Programmes such as Horizon Europe – which has a specific cluster<sup>21</sup> that addresses challenges related to food security, sustainable agriculture, and environmental conservation – fund pioneering developments in climate-smart agriculture and eco-friendly food processing, ensuring that EU products remain at the forefront of sustainable innovation.

## Sustainability in Practice: Examples from Across Europe

Across Europe, wineries are championing sustainability through innovative practices. In Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania, for example, many vineyards are embracing organic and bio-dynamic farming, reducing synthetic inputs and conserving biodiversity. Water, conservation, energy-efficient technologies, and renewable energy sources like solar power also help minimise environmental impact. Initiatives such as Sustainable Winegrowing Greece and the Wine Lover Romania Association support responsible vineyard management, indigenous grape cultivation, and carbon footprint reduction while fostering social responsibility by engaging local communities and preserving cultural heritage. These efforts demonstrate how sustainability and tradition go hand in hand, ensuring a resilient future for European wine production.



## The Organic Logo: A Mark of Trust

The EU Organic logo is a trusted mark, certifying high environmental and ethical standards. It can only be used on products that have been certified as organic by an authorised control agency or body, confirming they meet rigorous criteria covering farming, processing, and packaging. Products bearing this logo must fulfil strict conditions, including significant reductions in synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, prohibition of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and enhanced animal welfare. Additionally, organic certification guarantees that at least 95% of the ingredients are organic and strict conditions are met for the remaining 5%, providing further assurance that UK consumers are selecting genuinely sustainable, ethically produced, and carefully monitored food and drink products.

## Sustainability as a Competitive Advantage

For environmentally conscious UK consumers, EU food and beverage products stand out for their commitment to sustainability. Harmonised regulations ensure consistent standards across all the diverse regions of the EU, providing UK businesses with access to ethically produced goods that balance environmental responsibility with quality and reliability. By opting for sustainably produced EU products, UK retailers, chefs, and consumers can support a greener future while offering their customers the exceptional quality and diversity that European food and drink have to offer.



## Seasonal and Regional Opportunities for UK Businesses

Like markets everywhere, the UK's food and beverage market is defined by shifting seasonal trends and distinct regional tastes. For businesses seeking to meet evolving consumer expectations, high-quality European products offer an exceptional opportunity to tap into these market dynamics. Whether it's festive indulgence, summer refreshment, or regionally inspired offerings, the EU's diverse range of products can help UK retailers and food service providers satisfy demand year-round.

### Autumn and Winter Warmth and Festive Indulgence

The colder months drive demand for hearty, warming foods and indulgent treats. Comforting autumnal and winter dishes such as stews, roasts and pies benefit from flavourful additions like Hungarian **Gyulai kolbász PGI**, a smoky, spiced sausage that enhances casseroles and slow-cooked meals. Christmas, the biggest retail season, sees high demand for premium European products. German **Dresdner Christstollen PGI**, a rich, fruit-filled spiced loaf, and French **Champagne PDO** are festive staples. Traditional spirits also play a key role in seasonal celebrations. **Irish Whiskey PGI**, known for its smooth, triple-distilled character, is a favoured choice for winter cocktails, while Slovak **Spišská borovička PGI**, a juniper-flavoured spirit from the Spiš region, brings a distinctive touch to festive gatherings.



Champagne PDO, France

### Spring and Easter Specialties

Easter celebrations present an opportunity to introduce UK consumers to high-quality European confectionery and baked goods. Italian **Torrone di Bagnara PGI**, a traditional nougat, and Belgian **Speculoos**, spiced biscuits with a rich heritage, align with seasonal sweet-tooth trends. Meanwhile, **Nijolės Šakočienės šakotis PGI** (Nijolė's Tree Cake) from Lithuania, which is made by pouring batter onto a rotating spit over an open flame, has a long-standing tradition in celebrations such as weddings, birthdays, and other festive occasions.



Beurre Rose – Marque nationale du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg PDO, Luxembourg



Speculoos, Belgium

### Summer Refreshment and Alfresco Dining

As temperatures rise, consumer preferences shift towards lighter, fresher meals. Salads and charcuterie boards dominate summer menus, creating opportunities for standout European products. Vinegar made from **Abricots rouges du Roussillon PDO** (Red Apricots from Roussillon) from France is a natural fit for salads, while **Amêndoa Douro PDO** (Douro Almonds) from Portugal offer a delicate nutty flavour that adds depth to cheese platters and desserts. The UK's increasing interest in organic and sustainable food<sup>22</sup> further enhances the appeal of products such as Luxembourg's **Beurre Rose – Marque nationale du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg PDO**, a premium butter produced using traditional, sustainable farming methods, ideal for enriching the flavours of summer picnics and light meals.

### Regional Preferences: Tailoring to Local Demand

The UK is not a one-size-fits-all market. Regional variations influence food preferences, and businesses can enhance their offerings by aligning with local tastes.



Halloumi PDO, Cyprus

#### Northern England & Scotland:

Consumers in these regions favour robust, hearty flavours. Spanish **Chorizo de Cantimpalos PGI**, a mild, paprika-infused sausage, pairs well with traditional stews, while Cypriot **Halloumi PDO**, a firm, salty cheese, appeals to those seeking premium dairy products.



Kraški pršut PGI, Slovenia

#### Wales & the West Country:

Artisanal and locally sourced products are popular, making Slovenian **Kraški pršut PGI**, a dry-cured ham with a distinctive, smoky flavour, and Latvian **Jāņu siers**, a fresh, caraway-flavoured cheese traditionally enjoyed during midsummer celebrations, ideal for delicatessen counters. Meanwhile, Polish **Suska sechłońska PGI** prunes complement the region's famed lamb dishes.



Jāņu siers, Latvia



Pêra Rocha do Oeste PDO, Portugal

#### Southern England & Coastal Areas:

Consumers here gravitate towards Mediterranean-inspired diets. Portuguese **Pêra Rocha do Oeste PDO**, a crisp and juicy pear, is a refreshing snack or salad ingredient, while Greek **Krokos Kozanis PDO** saffron adds sophistication to risottos and other dishes.

### Successful Seasonal and Regional Promotions

Seasonal promotions present a key opportunity to highlight the unique heritage and craftsmanship of European products, which resonate well with UK buyers. Where possible, incorporating authentic stories such as the centuries-old tradition behind German **Dresdner Christstollen PGI**, a Christmas bread baked in Dresden for over 500 years using time-honoured recipes, or the artisanal production of Lithuanian **Nijolės Šakočienės šakotis PGI**

using a labour-intensive technique dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century – adds tangible value and differentiation. These stories underscore the product's regional roots and craftsmanship, enhancing appeal. Where product-specific narratives are not possible, emphasising broader themes of regional heritage, sustainable practices, and seasonal relevance remains an effective way to engage and influence buyers.



# Savouring Europe: Infusing UK Menus with Continental Flavours

European food and beverage products have long been integral to the UK's culinary landscape, enriching menus across the spectrum from fine dining establishments to casual eateries. The deep-rooted influence of European culinary traditions has not only diversified British cuisine but also elevated the dining experience for consumers and industry professionals alike.

## Integration into Menus

In fine dining, chefs often draw inspiration from European techniques and ingredients to craft sophisticated dishes. French cuisine, for instance, has significantly shaped British gastronomy, with many high-end restaurants incorporating classic French methods and dishes into their offerings. Italian influences are also prominent, with handmade pastas and risottos becoming staples in many establishments.

Casual eateries and gastropubs have embraced European flavours by integrating dishes such as Spanish tapas, Danish Smørrebrød, and Greek mezze into their menus. These offerings cater to the UK's growing appetite for diverse and authentic culinary experiences.<sup>23</sup> The rise of gastropubs, which blend traditional British pub culture with high-quality food, often features European-inspired dishes, reflecting a fusion of local and continental flavours.

## Influence of European Culinary Traditions

The popularity of the 'Mediterranean diet' has encouraged the use in UK menus of olive oils – such as **Istra PDO** olive oil from the Istrian peninsula, which spans both Croatia and Slovenia – fresh herbs, and a variety of vegetables, aligning with growing consumer interest in balanced and wholesome dining choices. From croissants to Danish pastries and canelés, European patisserie products have been incorporated into British baking, leading to their popularity in cafés and bakeries nationwide. Moreover, the concept of small plate dining, inspired by Spanish tapas culture, has become a prevalent trend that encourages social dining experiences and menu versatility.



## Staple European Products in the UK Market

Several European products have seamlessly integrated into the UK market to become pantry staples and menu highlights. Among French cheeses, **Saint-Nectaire PDO**, for example, has gained traction among UK retailers for its creamy texture and nutty aroma, while **Bleu d'Auvergne PDO** has been welcomed for its bold yet balanced flavour. Spanish chorizo, such as **Chorizo Riojano PGI**, has become a key ingredient in both traditional and modern British dishes, adding a depth of smoky spice to everything from stews to tapas-style plates. German sausages such as **Thüringer Rostbratwurst PGI**, known for its distinctive seasoning of marjoram and caraway, are now widely available and featured in gourmet hot dogs and pub menus across the UK.

## Positive Reception and Emerging Opportunities

Despite the established presence of many European staples, there remains a vast array of products from the EU that are yet to be fully discovered by the UK market. Artisanal cheeses like **Paški sir PDO**, a hard sheep's milk cheese from Croatia with a distinct flavour attributed to the unique climate and vegetation of the Adriatic island of Pag, or the Portuguese **Queijo S. Jorge PDO**, a robust cow's milk cheese aged to perfection, offer exciting new options for British cheese boards. From Romania, **Salam de Sibiu PGI**, a rich, savoury salami with subtle smoky notes, is an emerging delicacy with the potential to become a

favourite among charcuterie lovers. Additionally, lesser-known sausages such as **Loukaniko Pitsilias PGI**, a traditional Cypriot sausage made from pork marinated in red wine and flavoured with spices, provide new avenues for menu innovation in British restaurants.

## Aligning with Current Trends

Current dining trends<sup>24</sup> in the UK emphasise provenance, authenticity, and sustainability. European products align well with these preferences, offering rich histories and traditional production methods that resonate with the mindful choices of today's diners. By incorporating authentic European ingredients and sharing their stories, establishments can enhance their appeal and meet the evolving expectations of their clientele.





## Crafting Compelling Narratives for the UK Market

In the competitive landscape of the UK food and beverage sector, distinguishing products through authentic storytelling is paramount. European GIs<sup>25</sup> offer a unique opportunity to highlight the rich heritage, traditional production methods, and distinctive qualities of European products. By weaving these elements into compelling narratives, businesses can captivate UK consumers and foster a deeper connection with the product.

### The Power of Storytelling in Marketing

Storytelling transcends mere product description; it creates an emotional bond between the consumer and the product. A well-crafted story not only informs but also engages, making the product memorable and desirable. Incorporating elements such as historical background, regional connections, and

artisanal techniques can transform a product into a symbol of tradition and quality. This approach aligns with the growing consumer demand for authenticity and transparency in food sourcing.

### Elements of a Compelling GI Narrative

To effectively market GI products in the UK, consider the following storytelling framework:

- 1. Historical Background:** Begin with the origins of the product, tracing its history and evolution. Highlighting the product's journey through time can underscore its enduring value and authenticity.
- 2. Regional Connection:** Emphasise the unique characteristics of the region where the product is made. Discuss how the local environment, climate, and culture influence the product's distinctiveness.
- 3. Traditional Production Methods:** Detail the artisanal techniques and time-honoured practices involved in creating the product. This not only showcases craftsmanship but also reassures consumers of the product's quality and authenticity.

- 4. Unique Characteristics:** Highlight the specific qualities that set the product apart from others. Whether it's a unique flavour profile, texture, or appearance, these attributes should be clearly communicated.
- 5. Authenticity and Exclusivity:** Reinforce the product's genuine origin and the expertise required to produce it. This can justify a premium price point and appeal to consumers seeking exclusive, high-quality items.

Consider the story of Szegedi szalámi PDO, a Hungarian delicacy with a rich history:

### Szeged's Secret: A Taste Centuries in the Making

Nestled along the banks of the Tisza River, the city of Szeged in Hungary is renowned for its culinary heritage, epitomised by the celebrated Szegedi szalámi PDO. This delicacy, also known as Szegedi téliszalámi, has been meticulously crafted since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, embodying a rich tradition that has been preserved through generations.

The inception of Szegedi szalámi dates to 1869, when the Pick family began producing this distinctive salami in Szeged. The unique microclimate of the region, influenced by the nearby Tisza River, provides ideal conditions for curing and maturing the salami, resulting in its characteristic flavour and texture. The production process has remained largely unchanged, adhering to time-honoured methods that ensure its authenticity.

Crafted from carefully selected cuts of pork, the meat is coarsely minced and blended with a proprietary mix of spices, including white pepper and allspice. This mixture is then encased and subjected to a slow smoking process over beechwood for up to 14 days. Following smoking, the salami undergoes a meticulous drying and maturation period, during which a special noble mould forms on its surface, contributing to its unique flavour profile.



Szegedi szalámi PDO, Hungary

The expertise required to produce Szegedi szalámi PDO is a closely guarded tradition, passed down within families and the local community. This artisanal knowledge, combined with the region's specific environmental conditions, imparts qualities to the salami that are impossible to replicate elsewhere. In recognition of its exceptional attributes and deep-rooted connection to Szeged, Szegedi szalámi was granted PDO status by the European Union in 2007.

**Short summary for marketing:** *A traditional Hungarian delicacy steeped in history, Szegedi szalámi PDO has been crafted in Szeged for more than 150 years. Made from premium pork, it's slowly smoked over beechwood and aged to develop a rich, deep flavour with subtle hints of pepper. Encased in a natural mould, this salami embodies the time-honoured techniques and unique microclimate of its region, offering an authentic taste of Hungary.*

This narrative not only informs but also immerses the reader in the product's rich heritage, traditional production methods, and unique characteristics. By embracing this storytelling framework,

businesses can effectively promote GI-labelled products in the UK market, emphasising their authenticity, quality, and the rich traditions they represent.





## Tasting Success: Site Visits Unlocking New Opportunities for UK Buyers

In the dynamic world of food and beverages, nothing compares to experiencing a product firsthand. Site visits and study trips to EU producers offer UK businesses an unparalleled opportunity to explore new products, forge meaningful relationships, and gain a deeper understanding of regional specialities. These immersive experiences go beyond traditional B2B interactions, providing insights into the craftsmanship, traditions, and passion behind EU products that resonate with consumers.

### The Value of Site Visits and Study Trips

Site visits and study trips serve as a bridge between producers and buyers, fostering trust and facilitating long-term business collaborations. By stepping into the heart of production facilities, UK buyers and importers witness the intricate processes, quality standards, and unique geographical influences that shape the products they source. These experiences enhance their ability to communicate product stories effectively, enriching marketing narratives and bolstering consumer confidence.

For UK businesses, site visits also present an opportunity to uncover new, high-quality products that may not yet be widely available in the UK market. From premium wines and craft beers to high-quality poultry and speciality foods, emerging EU regions offer an exciting array of products that cater to evolving UK consumer preferences.

### Spotlight on Emerging EU Regions

While traditional markets like France, Italy, and Spain remain key players in the UK food and beverage sector, lesser-known regions are gaining momentum. Recent site visits have highlighted the potential of several EU countries and their unique offerings:



**Baltic Cheeses:** Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are gaining attention with their distinctive regional dairy specialities. These include artisanal products such as Latvia's mild Latvijas siers PGI, Lithuania's creamy Lietuviškas varškės sūris PGI, and Estonia's caraway-flavoured Sõir PGI. Visits to production sites showcase the rich culinary traditions and meticulous methods behind these cheeses, providing UK buyers with unique and authentic additions to their product range.



**Iberian Preserves and Condiments:** Spain and Portugal are renowned for their artisanal preserves and condiments. Notable examples include Portugal's Ovos Moles de Aveiro PGI, a traditional confectionery made of sweet egg yolk filling encased in a wafer shell, and Spain's Vinagre de Jerez PDO, a sherry vinegar aged using the solera system, which is known for its complex flavour profile. Visits to producers in these regions can provide insights into traditional methods and quality standards, presenting opportunities for UK buyers to diversify their offerings with authentic Iberian specialities.

**Scandinavian Craft Beer:** The Nordic countries are emerging as key players in the craft beer movement, offering unique styles and innovative brewing techniques. Site visits to Scandinavian breweries provide a firsthand look at their pioneering approaches and commitment to quality.

**Polish Poultry:** Poland is an increasingly important supplier of poultry to the UK market, known for its high standards and competitive pricing. Visiting poultry farms offers UK buyers direct insights into sustainable practices and product differentiation.



**Greek and Bulgarian Wines:** A growing interest in distinctive and high-quality wines from Greece and Bulgaria has positioned these regions as promising sources for wine importers. Indigenous grape varieties, sustainable practices, and a strong commitment to quality are attracting buyers seeking new options for their portfolios, such as Дунавска равнина PGI (Danubian Plain), Bulgaria, a fertile Bulgarian wine region producing a variety of red and white wines, or Σαντορίνη PDO (Santorini), a renowned white wine made primarily from the Assyrtiko grape.

### A Strategic Platform for UK Buyers

Participating in study trips and site visits offers UK businesses more than just an educational experience – it's a strategic investment. For those looking to expand their product offerings

and develop deeper industry connections, embracing site visits as part of their business strategy is a step towards success in an ever-evolving market landscape.



# Distinctive EU Food and Drink with Business Potential

Having explored the merits of EU food and beverages – firstly innovation and diversity, but also quality, tradition, authenticity, safety and sustainability – and the industry's commitment to upholding the highest standards in all of these areas, we now turn to look at specific products in more depth.

This section highlights a range of food and drink products from nine categories, all of which carry official EU quality labels – primarily Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), and Organic. The selection includes both well-known names and lesser-known specialities, each combining trusted origin with standout characteristics.

Various aspects of each example are outlined, such as its unique features, production methods, and potential pairings or accompaniments. Consistent quality and clear provenance make these products valuable additions for professionals seeking reliable and distinctive options, whether for retail shelves, menus, or curated product ranges.

## Drinks and Dairy

Starting with drinks, the EU's rich history and diverse geography have helped shape a variety of iconic wines, beers, and spirits. Europe is the birthplace of winemaking, and countries like France, Italy, and Spain have long led the industry. But quality wines now also come from Croatia, Greece, Hungary, and elsewhere. Many European vineyards are small, family-run affairs relying on handcrafting techniques, with climate and soil playing a key role in each wine's characteristics.

The continent is also home to centuries-old traditions in beer brewing – producing over 30 billion litres of beer a year – and distillation of iconic spirits such as Irish Whiskey PGI, French Cognac PGI and Polish Vodka PGI, as well as some lesser-known tipples to be found in the next few pages.

As regards dairy, the EU offers vast pastures that are ideal for producing milk used in a wide variety of products, such as butter, yoghurts, and especially cheese. It is therefore no surprise that the EU is home to some of the world's best-loved cheeses, made according to methods passed down through generations and stretching back hundreds of years.

## From Sweet to Savoury

Confectionery and bakery are further areas in which the EU excels, producing a cornucopia of sweet treats that are shaped by its diverse cultures. Countries across Europe are celebrated for their rich histories in pastries and cakes, which are enjoyed at various times of the day. Wholegrain flour sourced from wheat cultivated using tried and tested methods embodies the rich heritage of European baking. The art of preserving fruit and berries in jams and juices remains a cherished tradition. Finally, EU chocolate is renowned for its exceptional craftsmanship, blending traditional techniques with innovative artistry to create exquisite confections.

Rearing animals including livestock and poultry for food has been part of European life for centuries. The unique features of the different EU Member States have led to a plethora of animal breeds and rearing techniques. These have given rise to an array of meat cuts and fresh and cured meat products that are typical to each region.

Fruit, vegetables and legumes are the cornerstones of a healthy diet, and from its Arctic coasts to its Mediterranean valleys, the EU offers an abundance of nutritious seasonal produce that can be eaten fresh or frozen. Thanks to its varied terrains and climates, professionals across retail and foodservice can explore an extensive range of flavours and ingredients to suit diverse product lines and culinary applications.

These diverse categories illustrate the strength and breadth of EU food and drink production. With consistent quality, trusted origin, and a wide variety of formats and flavour profiles, these products offer valuable opportunities for menu development, category expansion, and differentiation in retail or foodservice.

The following pages spotlight a selection of distinctive products from across the EU – some well-established, others emerging – each with clear potential for inclusion in professional offers.



# A look at the wine list



## Malta PDO Wines from the Island of Malta

**Malta PDO** red wines are those reds produced specifically on the island of Malta – rather than on Malta's sister island of Gozo. Vines are cultivated in most parts of the island, with the highest concentrations in the north and west.

Winemaking has a long history on Malta, going back over 2,000 years to the Phoenician period. Production really took off in the 1970s, when planting of more international varieties of grape began. Along with the indigenous Gellewża, red grape varieties grown today include Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot noir.

Malta's Mediterranean climate, salty maritime environment, and calcareous soil, which ranges from slightly to markedly alkaline, are perfect for producing red wines with colours from ruby to intense red – and a brownish tint in the case of aged wines – and a high alcoholic content of around 13% and above. Malta reds tend to be dry, medium-to-full bodied and fruity, with distinct peppery, herbaceous aromas and underlying sweet tobacco notes. They are characterised by soft, velvety tannins and a pleasant, smooth finish on the palate. The wines can be enjoyed on their own, or with roast or grilled meats, pasta dishes and cheeses.



## Mavrud, a Grape Behind both PDO and PGI Wines from Bulgaria

Cultivated in Bulgaria since ancient times, Mavrud is a grape variety commonly associated with high-quality wines, particularly those produced under the **Тракийска низина (Thracian Valley) PGI** designation. Some wines made from Mavrud also carry Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status, depending on where and how they are produced.

The name derives from the Greek 'mavro', meaning 'black', probably on account of its bluish-black skin. The variety is thought to originate from near Asenovgrad, in the Thracian Valley, where it continues to thrive today. High concentrations of Mavrud vineyards are also found around Pazardzhik, Stara Zagora, and on the Black Sea coast, while the variety has recently been cultivated successfully in the Eastern Rhodopes and Sakar and Melnik wine regions.

Although the Mavrud bunch is large, winged, and relatively heavy, the grapes are small and spherical, with a thick, tough skin. Mavrud tends to ripen around mid-October and is not resistant to the cold. It thus thrives best in warmer parts of Bulgaria with deep, fresh alluvial soils.

A source of great pride for Bulgarians, wines crafted from Mavrud grapes are celebrated for their intense purple-red colour and complex flavour, often featuring notes of forest fruits, sweet cherry, blackcurrant and dried fruit. The palate is characterised by velvety textures and sweet, ripe tannins, offering a lingering finish and going well with red meat, wild game, and aged cheeses.



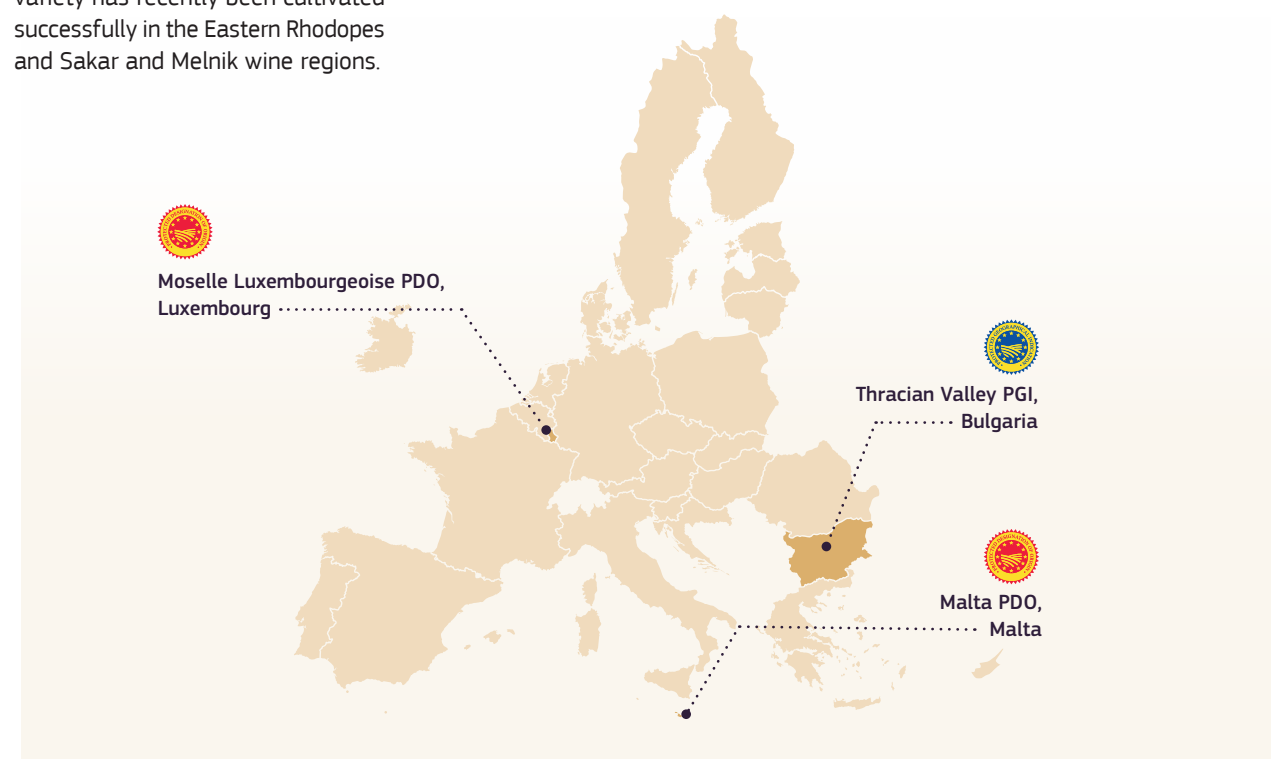
## Moselle Luxembourgise PDO from Luxembourg

**Moselle Luxembourgise PDO** wines come from a stretch of vineyards along some 25 km of the western bank of the River Moselle, which forms part of Luxembourg's border with Germany. Located in the south east of the country, the area is Luxembourg's only wine region, yet its wines have achieved great renown.

Along with the quality of its white wines, the Moselle Luxembourgise region is celebrated for its diverse range. Grape varieties cultivated locally include Rivaner, Pinot gris, Auxerrois, Riesling, and Pinot blanc. Also, Crémant de Luxembourg, a distinguished sparkling wine made

in accordance with traditional methods, accounts for a significant share of production.

Vines have flourished on the sun-drenched hillsides of the Moselle since the Romans first began growing them in the area. Cultivation continues to this day, with wine-makers combining tradition with modern innovations. The region's mild climate and unique soil, rich in limestone and clay, contribute to the distinctive character of its wines, which provide an exceptional accompaniment to various meat and fish dishes and numerous types of cheese.





# Fancy a quick pint?

## Bere Sadu PGI from Romania

Situated near the town of Sadu, in Romania's Sibiu County, a local brewery is known for producing traditional, unfiltered, bottom-fermented **Bere Sadu PGI** beers that reflect the rich brewing heritage of the region. The beers contain nothing but malt, hops, and yeast, as well as water from a local spring that has undergone extensive laboratory analysis to ensure an ideal balance of minerals for brewing.

Brewing has a long and distinguished history in Sadu. Built during 1912-1913, the original brewery occupied a prominent place in the town, producing up to 220,000 hectolitres of

beer a year. It went into decline in the 1990s and closed in 2000, but the area's beer industry was revived in 2016 by a local entrepreneur, Marius Milonean, who had studied brewing in Austria.

One of Bere Sadu's notable offerings is a golden, helles-style lager with a dense, creamy head. Refreshing and enjoyable, it presents an initial bitterness that transitions into a subtle, bready, sweet flavour, before reverting to a touch of bitterness for the finish. Another popular brew is a dark beer appreciated for its balanced flavour profile.



Bere Sadu PGI, Romania

## České pivo PGI from Czechia

**České pivo PGI** refers to some 100 brands of beer produced throughout Czechia. Famous around the world, these beers are distinguished by their top-quality ingredients, traditional production methods, and local know-how passed on from generation to generation that preserves the country's rich brewing heritage.

Czechia's reputation for brewing excellence dates back to at least 933 AD, when the monks at Břevnov Monastery founded a brewery. **České pivo PGI** must contain only locally sourced hops, yeast, water and Pilsen malt, a light type of malt made from two-row spring barley. Use of traditional brewing techniques ensures that the beers

retain their original sensory properties. Elements of the process that give Czech beers their unique taste include decoction mashing, in which part of the mash is removed, boiled and returned to the main mash, and two-stage fermentation.

Typically pale pilsner lagers, characterised by a transparent golden colour, high foaminess and a light flavour profile, Czech beers also include dark draughts featuring flavours like caramel. They can be distinguished from their foreign counterparts by their residual unfermented extract, more intense colour, bitterer taste, and higher polyphenol content.



České pivo PGI, Czechia

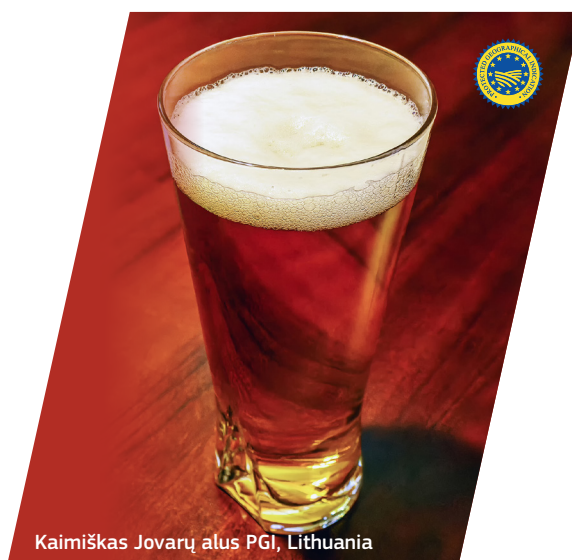
## Kaimiškas Jovarų alus PGI from Lithuania

Brewed at a family-owned brewery in the village of Jovarai, Lithuania, **Kaimiškas Jovarų alus PGI** is a traditional Lithuanian farmhouse ale. It is produced in line with recipes and methods that have been handed down through generations of the family for more than 130 years.

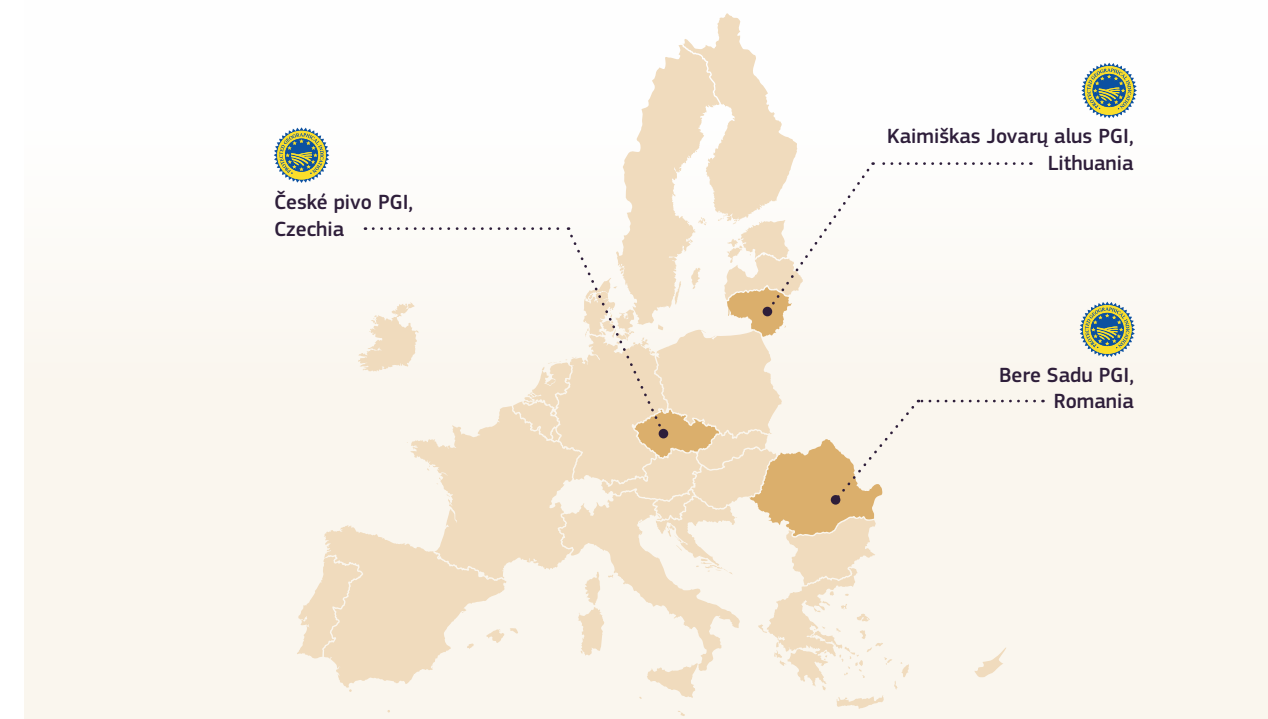
The brewing involves distinctive techniques that contribute to the beer's singular flavour. For instance, whereas hops and wort are usually boiled together, to make Kaimiškas Jovarų alus, the hops are boiled separately, and the wort is not boiled at all. This technique was common in Lithuania in the past, with the mashing process

effectively pasteurising the beer. However, the key element in the flavour is the yeast, which is only found in the area and has a unique DNA.

With a colour ranging from golden yellow to amber, Kaimiškas Jovarų alus is characterised by cloudiness from the yeast sediment and a moderately high, thick, foamy head. The beer has a strong, malty, nutty, and herbaceous flavour, and the hops provide additional bitterness. Typical aromas include bread, yeast, caramel and fruit, as well as natural honey, which is sometimes added during production for an extra nuance.



Kaimiškas Jovarų alus PGI, Lithuania





# Getting into the spirit of things

# Spirits

## Irish Poitín PGI from Ireland

A unique, clear spirit, **Irish Poitín PGI** takes its name from the small copper pot still in which it is traditionally distilled and which is often heated using peat fires. With an alcoholic strength by volume of 40% and above, Poitín initially had malt barley, and subsequently potatoes, as its base but can be made from whey, sugar beet, or molasses.

Although historically an unaged spirit, Poitín is now frequently rested in oak barrels to add depth of flavour. This innovative maturation process enriches it with complex notes, enhancing its character while maintaining its authenticity and heritage and providing a genuine taste of Ireland's distilling tradition.

Poitín's roots go back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century and early Irish monastic settlements. Notwithstanding its monastic origins, both ecclesiastical and civil powers took a dim view of the spirit, and its production and consumption were banned for many years. As a result, Poitín was usually distilled in remote rural areas, out of sight of the authorities. It wasn't until 1997 that the ban was lifted. Today, as well as being consumed neat, Poitín features in cocktails with ingredients such as ginger beer, lime juice and coffee liqueur.



Irish Mule - ingredients:  
Irish Poitín PGI, ginger beer, lime juice



Estonian vodka PGI, Estonia

## Estonian vodka PGI from Estonia

Also with a minimum alcoholic strength by volume of 40%, **Estonian vodka PGI** is made from ethyl alcohol obtained from rye, wheat, or potatoes grown in Estonia. Smooth tasting, colourless, and sediment-free, the vodka's flavour varies depending on the raw material. Potatoes give it viscosity, sweetness, smoothness, and a full-bodied quality. Rye likewise makes the vodka full bodied, while lending it a robust and spicy flavour. Wheat gives subtlety, smoothness, and fruitiness.

Vodka has been distilled in Estonia for more than 500 years, with the earliest written evidence of its production there dating back to 1485.

The ingredients reflect national agricultural practices. For centuries, rye and wheat have been the main cereals cultivated in Estonia, while the country has a strong potato-growing tradition. Another distinctive feature of Estonian vodka is the use of water solely of Estonian origin. The water's richness in minerals ensures that the spirit carries the distinctive aroma of the raw materials.

Classic choices to accompany Estonian vodka include pickled vegetables, black bread with bacon, and boiled potatoes with dill. Among more contemporary pairings are smoked fish like herring or salmon.

## Suomalainen Marjalikööri and Suomalainen Hedelmälikööri PGI from Finland

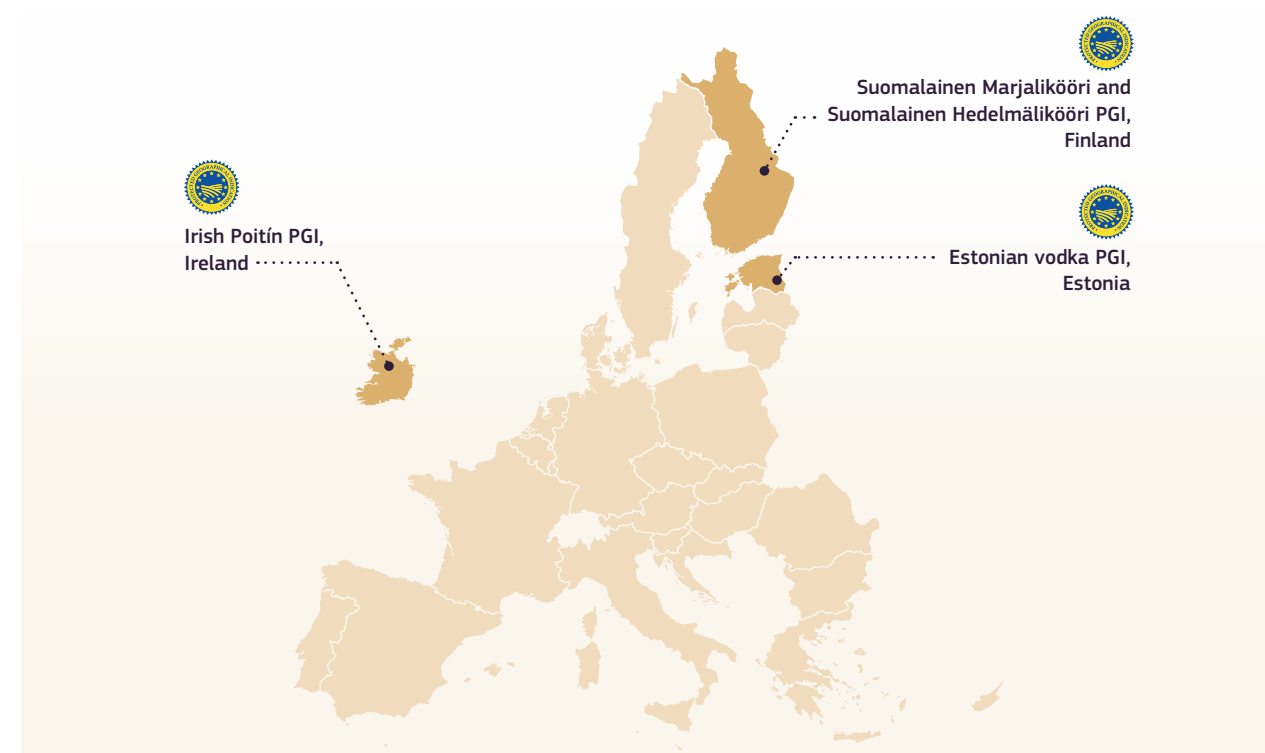
**Suomalainen Marjalikööri and Suomalainen Hedelmälikööri PGI** (Finnish berry liqueur and Finnish fruit liqueur) are made from delicious fruit and berries grown in Finland, such as cloudbberries, bilberries, and lingonberries. Finland's unspoilt landscapes with their tranquil lakes and vast forests lend its abundant wild berries and fruit a unique aroma and freshness. Given the country's northerly latitude, the contrast between its seemingly endless summer nights and long, dark winters leads to a brief yet intense growing season that gives wild berries and fruit a concentrated flavour packed with natural sugars and acids.

Liqueur making in Finland dates back centuries. Finns would preserve the summer's bounty by infusing it in spirits so they could enjoy its flavours even in winter. Modern master distillers aren't afraid to innovate, including by picking the produce at peak ripeness. They then infuse spirits with the fruit or berries until the liqueur matures and achieves a rich flavour and beautiful colour.

Finnish berry and fruit liqueurs can be savoured neat or used as a base for cocktails. They also offer a wonderful accompaniment to dairy-based or chocolate-based desserts. Finns particularly enjoy their country's liqueurs during traditional celebrations and as digestifs.



Suomalainen Marjalikööri and Suomalainen Hedelmälikööri PGI, Finland





# Let's talk about cheese

# Cheese & Dairy



## Fromage de Herve PDO from Belgium

An iconic cheese from Belgium's Pays de Herve region, with which it is synonymous, **Fromage de Herve PDO** is made from locally produced pasteurised cow's milk. Its pale orange, slightly greasy rind is washed and matured with Belgian abbey beer.

Known for its soft, creamy, delicate texture and buttery taste with tangy, sweet undertones, Fromage de Herve's rich flavours have been admired by cheese enthusiasts since the Middle Ages. The cheese is characterised by its square shape and warm brick colour, as well as its strong, distinctive aroma – the result of a ripening process traditionally

carried out in the cellars of the Herve countryside and during which the cheese is washed and turned several times a week.

One of Belgium's most popular cheeses, Fromage de Herve is often eaten with dark bread and onion. The older generation typically enjoys it with Sirop de Liège (Liege syrup) – a jam-like apple and pear spread, sometimes containing dates and fruit such as apricots – and a cup of coffee. It is also a great cheese with which to end a meal and goes well with a warm wine, a vintage port, or the type of dark abbey beer in which it is washed.



Fromage de Herve PDO, Belgium

## Danbo PGI from Denmark

Denmark's most widely eaten cheese, **Danbo PGI**, is one of only three Danish cheeses holding the PGI designation, alongside **Danablu PGI** and **Esrom PGI**. It is a semi-soft cheese made from cow's milk near the city of Vejle.

Created in 1896 by Rasmus Nielsen, who studied cheesemaking in East Prussia and the Netherlands, Danbo is known for its square shape and smear-ripening process. This method, which can take from four weeks to 12 months, involves regular washing and coating with bacterial and yeast cultures which are washed off at the end of the

ageing process. The cultures impart a strong aroma and soft texture, making the cheese easy to slice.

A common feature of Danish breakfast tables, Danbo is frequently enjoyed with crackers, in a rye sandwich with radish and red onions, or even grilled. It also pairs well with fresh fruit, cured meats, and raspberry jam, and with dry white and fruity red wines. Furthermore, caraway seeds are a common addition to cheese in Denmark, and Danbo with caraway seeds is popularly known as 'King Christian' cheese, after Christian IX, King of Denmark from 1863 to 1906.



Danbo PGI, Denmark

## Noord-Hollandse Gouda PDO from The Netherlands

Produced exclusively in the Dutch province of North Holland, **Noord-Hollandse Gouda PDO** cheese is made from pasteurised cow's milk sourced locally. Production takes place in line with traditional methods that highlight the cheese's unique regional characteristics and quality. It is carefully matured under controlled conditions, with ageing periods ranging from a few weeks to over a year.

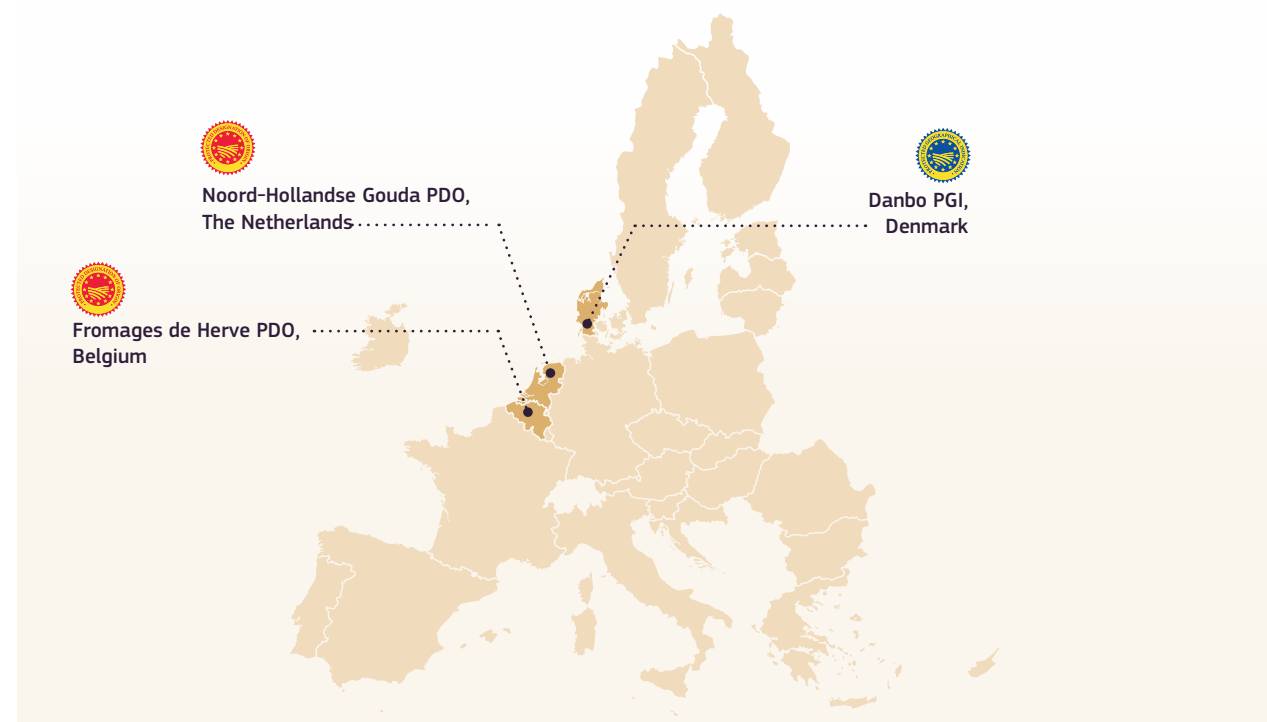
Noord-Hollandse Gouda is famous for its rich, creamy, and fudgy texture that makes it melt in the mouth; its mild, slightly sweet and yet tangy flavour; and its ripening crystals, which give the cheese its delectable crunch. North Holland's

salty sea air and rich, lush pastures contribute to Gouda's unique taste, which combines toasted flavours with hints of cocoa, salted caramel, and spice.

On a cheeseboard or a snack plate, Noord-Hollandse Gouda works well with peaches, plums, cashews, and pecans or with fresh cucumber, sun-ripened tomatoes, and a mildly spicy bresaola. It can be enjoyed with a Bock beer or a red or white wine. Among reds, it works best with light wines with fruity notes, such as a Fleurie from Beaujolais. When pairing with whites, opt for an off-dry wine like a Riesling or an unoaked Chardonnay.



Noord-Hollandse Gouda PDO, The Netherlands





# Time for a sweet treat

## Turrón de Alicante PGI from Spain

A traditional Mediterranean nougat from the region of Alicante, south-eastern Spain, **Turrón de Alicante PGI** is made with locally sourced, high-quality toasted almonds, honey, sugar, and egg whites. A hot syrup from the honey and sugar is whipped into the beaten egg whites, and the mixture is cooked further until it becomes hard and breakable when cooled. The almonds are then stirred in. They are kept whole rather than chopped up so that the oil from the nuts doesn't mix into the nougat, which thus remains crunchy and brittle, with a rich, sweet, nutty flavour.

Turrón has been made in the area since at least the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Given the popularity of white nougat in the Arab world, it is thought that the recipe arrived in Europe during the period of Al-Andalus from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when Muslim states controlled much of the Iberian Peninsula.

Turrón de Alicante is produced using artisanal methods that have been passed down through generations. It is usually shaped into a flat rectangular tablet and traditionally broken with a mallet. A quintessentially festive treat, for many Spaniards Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without Turrón.



Turrón de Alicante PGI, Spain

## Nougat de Montélimar PGI from France

Often compared to **Turrón de Alicante PGI**, yet quite distinct in texture and flavour, Montélimar, in the French department of Drôme, has long been synonymous with its soft, chewy **Nougat de Montélimar PGI**. The nougat dates back to at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it is thought that almond trees were first planted in the area. As well as a generous helping of roasted almonds and pistachios, it contains sugar, lavender honey, vanilla, and egg whites, which give it its whitish colour.

The international success of Nougat de Montélimar is in no small part thanks to Émile Loubet, Mayor of Montélimar from 1870 and later

President of France from 1899 to 1906. President Loubet campaigned vigorously to promote the nougat and offered it as a gift to foreign heads of state during official visits. Traffic jams on the main roads heading towards the Mediterranean are also believed to have had a role to play, with many travellers first encountering the nougat while taking a break from the congestion at Montélimar.

Made in Montélimar itself and in 13 nearby towns and villages, Nougat de Montélimar comes in soft and hard varieties. It is traditionally enjoyed on festive occasions and has become a hallmark of Provençal culinary heritage.



Nougat de Montélimar PGI, France

## Loukoumi Geroskipou PGI from Cyprus

Originating from Geroskipou, south-western Cyprus, **Loukoumi Geroskipou PGI** dates back to 1895 when Sophocles Athanasiou returned home after many years overseas. During his travels, Sophocles had acquired a taste for loukoumi and developed his own recipe. Back in Geroskipou, he opened a factory and a shop, and other local confectioners started production following the same methods that are still used today. Soon, the reputation of Loukoumi Geroskipou spread across Cyprus and beyond.

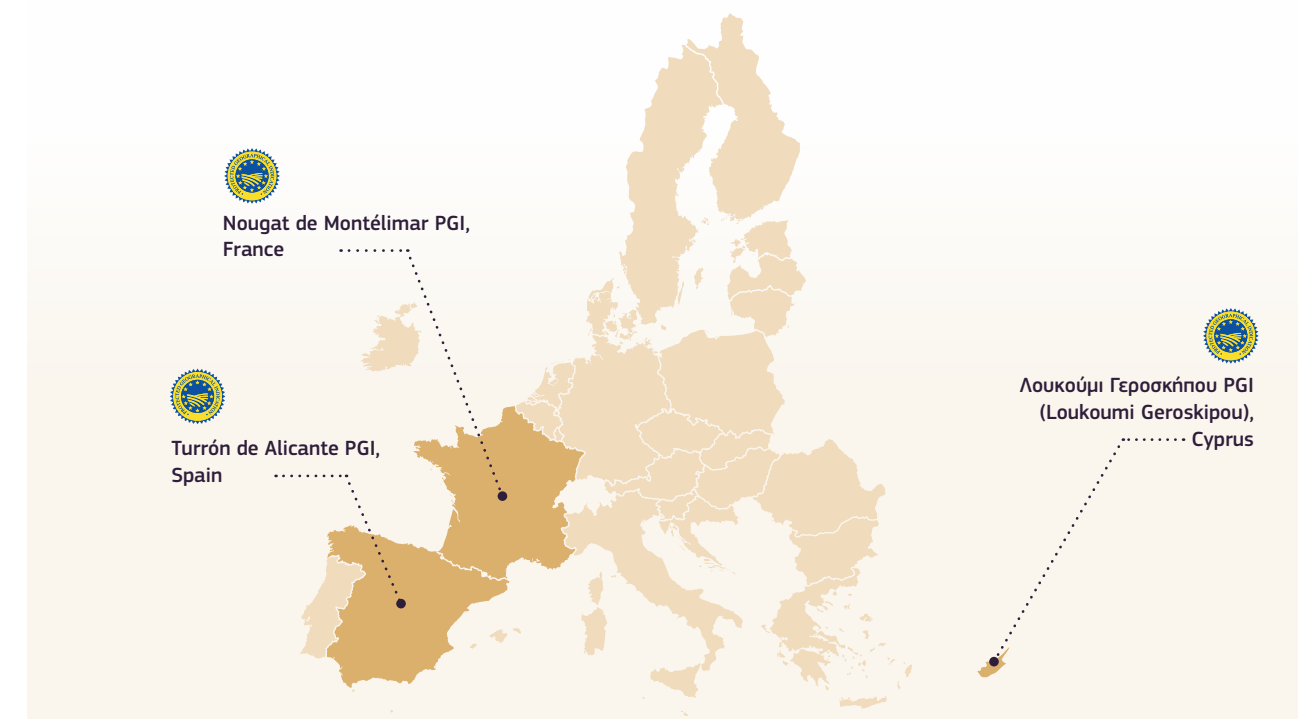
Crafted using traditional skills, simple ingredients – primarily sugar, water, and corn starch – and a lot of patience and precision, this sweet, colourful

delicacy contains no glucose or gelatine, unlike many varieties of loukoumi. The mixture is boiled, thickened, and cooled to achieve the product's unmistakable texture, characterised by a firmness that allows it to spring back into shape when squeezed and a softness that makes it melt in the mouth.

Loukoumi Geroskipou comes in several flavours, chosen from a pre-approved list. Only those flavours that complement the product's natural sweetness are included. The selection ranges from rose, strawberry, and mandarin to banana, bergamot, and pistachio. Once ready, the loukoumi are cut into bite-sized cubes and dusted with icing sugar or grated coconut.



Loukoumi Geroskipou, Cyprus





## Our daily bread

### Pane di Altamura PDO from Italy

A speciality of the area around Altamura, in Italy's Apulia region, **Pane di Altamura PDO** is a naturally leavened bread made from locally produced re-milled durum wheat semolina, a sourdough starter, salt, and water. Historically, a loaf of Pane di Altamura would be intended to feed a family for one or even two weeks. Durability is therefore a key characteristic of the bread, which can remain fresh for several days.

Baking has deep roots in Altamura, with the oldest of the 90 or so bakeries still operating in the town dating back to the late 14<sup>th</sup> century.

However, the area's reputation in the field goes back much further: the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC Roman poet Horace described its bread as "by far the best to be had".

The recipe and the production process for Pane di Altamura have remained unchanged down the centuries. There are even precise indications for the characteristics of the loaf, which must have a crust at least 3 mm thick and weigh no less than 500 g. Dark in appearance, the thickness of its crust gives it a crunchy texture, which contrasts with the soft, yellow crumb inside.



Pane di Altamura PDO, Italy

### Dresdner Stollen PGI from Germany

Also known as Dresdner Christstollen or Dresdner Weihnachtsstollen, **Dresdner Stollen PGI** is a traditional German Christmas bread from Dresden, the history of which can be traced back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Originally, it was an austere loaf of flour, yeast and water made during Advent, when people were fasting and baking with butter was banned by the Catholic Church.

In 1490, Pope Innocent VIII exempted Dresden's stollen bakers from the butter ban. This paved the way for the evolution of the recipe to encompass not only butter but also ingredients like marzipan, almonds, spices, and dried and candied fruit, resulting in Dresdner Stollen's growth in popularity as a festive treat.

Today, Dresdner Stollen is produced in select bakeries in Dresden and 12 neighbouring municipalities. Bakers begin by combining wheat flour, yeast, and whole milk into a dough. Although they draw from a specific set of ingredients and follow fixed proportions, many add their own personal touches. Once the loaves are baked, they are coated with butter and dusted with icing sugar for a festive final touch. When the crust is cut, it reveals a treasure trove of ingredients that combine to create a loaf that is rich in aromas and flavours.



Dresdner Stollen PGI, Germany

### Upplandskubb PDO from Sweden

Produced in the province of Uppland, eastern Sweden, **Upplandskubb PDO** is made only from locally milled rye and wheat flour, but it is the baking process that truly makes the bread stand out. In fact, 'baking' is not really the right word. Rather than being baked, the dough is placed in a closed, cylindrical mould, which is then left in boiling water for a few hours. As a result, the bread develops no crust at all.

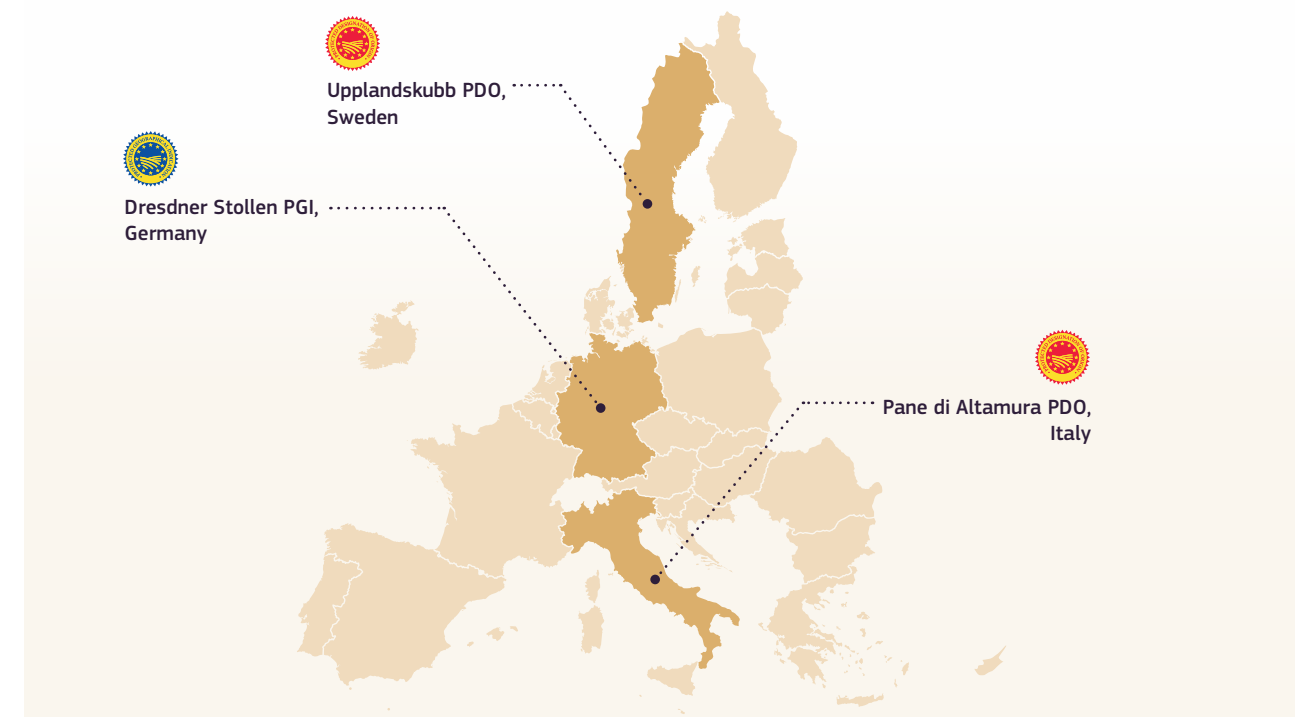
The oldest known recipes for Upplandskubb are from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was only in the 1920s that the bread was given its current name, when it attracted

the interest of a Stockholm woman named Elisabet Langenberg. She began making and selling Upplandskubb, raising its profile across Sweden.

With its colour varying from gingerbread to greyish brown, Upplandskubb is moist and sticky, with a delicate, crumbly texture. It possesses a unique rye flavour, a combination of sweetness and sourness, and a slightly burnt aroma. The cylindrical loaf, which keeps well, is typically cut into quarter-circle slices and eaten at Christmas. It is commonly served with cured herring, lard, or onion.



Upplandskubb PDO, Sweden





# Something for the meat eaters



## Szegedi szalámi PDO from Hungary

From the Hungarian city of Szeged, **Szegedi szalámi PDO** is produced using unique methods dating back some 150 years. The River Tisza, on which Szeged stands, creates a humid microclimate that gives the salami its specific characteristics.

Made from premium-quality pork from the Mangalica pig – a Hungarian breed known for its thick, curly coat of hair – and spices including white pepper, paprika, and allspice, the salami contains no artificial additives. It is cured in cold air and smoked over beechwood. During this process, a noble mould forms on the casing, protecting the salami from bacteria and enhancing its flavour. The taste balances mild saltiness with subtle spice notes and rich meat tones.

The texture is firm yet tender. An even distribution of fat adds to the salami's richness.

Popularised in Hungary by butchers from the Italian region of Friuli in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when many Italians migrated due to economic hardship and agricultural challenges, seeking work in Central Europe and bringing traditional curing techniques with them, winter salami takes its name from being originally made only in winter, when ice was needed for the curing process. It works well on pizzas and charcuterie boards and in sandwiches, risottos, and pasta dishes. For an authentic experience, try it with Baracskai cheese.



Szegedi szalámi PDO, Hungary

## Meso crne slavonske svinje PDO from Croatia

**Meso crne slavonske svinje PDO** (meat of the Black Slavonian pig) is produced exclusively in the 13 counties of continental Croatia and the city of Zagreb. Obtained from Black Slavonian piglets and fattening pigs, this dark-coloured meat is renowned for its exceptional quality.

Favourable climatic conditions for cereal production and the area's vast pasturelands on river floodplains are conducive to pig breeding. First bred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Count Karl Pfeiffer, the Black Slavonian pig is meatier at an earlier age than other pigs and particularly suited to living on floodplain pastures.

The pigs' natural diet includes cereals, legumes, coarse fodder, and forest nuts such as acorns, chestnuts, and beech nuts, all of which must originate in the meat's production area. This, together with the semi-wild farming methods that involve the pigs spending long periods in the open air, gives the meat its tender texture, depth of flavour, and marbling. Meso crne slavonske svinje is especially sought after for its high intramuscular fat content, which enhances the succulence of dishes, making it a delicacy in Croatian cuisine. The meat is ideal for production of bacon and sausages, especially Kulen, a local dry sausage.



Black Slavonian pig, Croatia

## Liptovské droby PGI from Slovakia

A traditional delicacy from the Liptov region of Slovakia, **Liptovské droby PGI** is a unique kind of sausage consisting of grated potatoes, cracklings (crispy pork fat), and semolina flour seasoned with onions, garlic, marjoram, black pepper, and salt and encased in pork or beef intestines. The inclusion of potatoes rather than sausage meat is the product's distinctive feature.

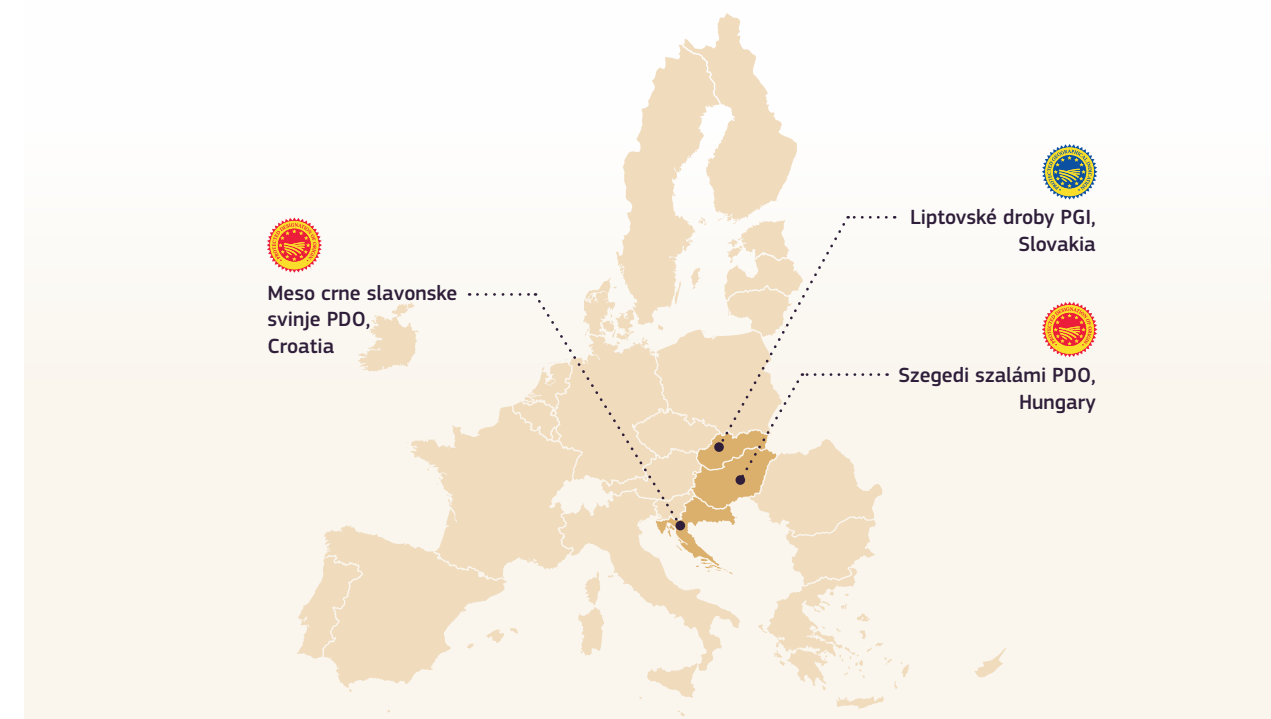
Local conditions were key to the development of Liptovské droby. With its high altitude, cold climate, and medium-hard soil, Liptov is not conducive to grain cultivation – as evidenced by a catastrophic failure of the grain harvest in the years

1771 to 1773 – but it is suitable for potatoes. First grown in the area around 1750, they quickly became a staple of the local diet. Moreover, Liptov is self-sufficient in livestock, particularly pigs, and historically it was vital, for economic reasons, for the inhabitants to make optimum use of offal.

Liptovské droby has a soft consistency, with a smooth, moderately moist, light-grey surface. When sliced, the sausage is greyish-yellow, while its flavour combines potatoes and spices. It is regularly served at fairs, in restaurants and at weddings, and is a hit with visitors to the region.



Liptovské droby PGI, Slovakia





## An appetising fruit and nut mix



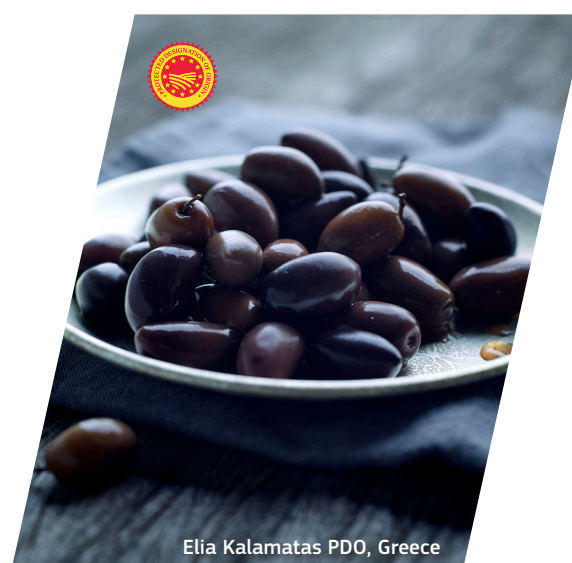
### Elia Kalamatas PDO from Greece

Produced in the Greek region of Messinia, in the southern Peloponnese, and named after its capital city of Kalamata, **Ελιά Καλαμάτας (Elia Kalamatas) PDO** olives are world renowned thanks to Messinia's specific terroir and climatic conditions. The olives are plump and almond shaped, with a hooked tip and a glossy and durable peel that is aubergine in colour. They have a smooth, meaty texture, delicate fruity notes, and often a mild smoky aroma.

When ripe, Elia Kalamatas are harvested by hand to avoid bruising and stored in brine. This ensures that they lose much of their bitterness

through natural fermentation, although some polyphenol remains afterwards. Nothing is added to the olives during this process, which may take up to six months, depending on the weather conditions.

Up to 100,000 tonnes of Elia Kalamatas can be produced in particularly fruitful years, around 80% of which is usually destined for export. As well as being delicious eaten on their own or as a feature of Greek mezze platters and charcuterie boards, the olives make for a sumptuous extra virgin olive oil with a unique taste and smooth, silky texture.



Elia Kalamatas PDO, Greece

### Wiśnia nadwiślanka PDO from Poland

A traditional variety of sour cherry grown along the banks of Poland's River Vistula, the **Wiśnia nadwiślanka PDO** is known for its dark red or maroon colour and small size. Firm, juicy, aromatic, and slightly tart, it has a high sugar, acid, and anthocyanin content. A particular characteristic is that when the stalk is removed, the juice fills the stalk cavity and sets like jelly, sealing the rest of the juice in and prolonging the shelf life of the fruit.

The first Wiśnia nadwiślanka orchards were planted more than a century ago in the village of Słupia Nadbrzeżna. Over time, the

trees have adapted to the clay- and lime-rich soils and moderate micro-climate of the Central Vistula Valley. Elsewhere, they are prone to frost damage. Conversely, other varieties tend to perform poorly under the valley's soil and climate conditions.

Poland is one of the world's leading producers of sour cherries, and cherries of all kinds have played an important role in the country's gastronomy for centuries. Wiśnia nadwiślanka are exquisite eaten on their own but are also used in juices, syrups, jams, desserts, and traditional Polish alcoholic beverages such as wiśniówka.



Wiśnia nadwiślanka PDO, Poland

### Castanha dos Soutos da Lapa PDO from Portugal

**Castanha dos Soutos da Lapa PDO** is a type of large chestnut grown in specific municipalities in the districts of Viseu and Guarda, northern Portugal. It is obtained from the Longal and Martainha varieties of chestnut tree. Longal chestnuts are very bright and reddish-brown; those from the Martainha are moderately bright and a lighter brown.

For centuries, chestnut trees have occupied a central place in the life of the region. As well as providing an important food source, their wood has been used for tasks like building, basket weaving, and barrel making. The area's unique climate

and traditional farming practices have helped develop the chestnuts' distinct characteristics.

Known for its exceptional quality, the Castanha dos Soutos da Lapa has a light, sweet taste and a soft, smooth texture. Its rich, delicate flavour is perfect for both sweet and savoury foods, making it a highly prized ingredient in Portuguese cuisine. The chestnuts can be turned into jams, syrups, or mousses, or into chestnut flour, a key component of numerous puddings and cakes. They can also be boiled or roasted and used in dishes such as chestnut purée and chicken with chestnuts.



Castanha dos Soutos da Lapa PDO, Portugal





# Straight from the soil

# Vegetables

## Steirischer Kren PGI from Austria

Grown in the Austrian region of Styria, **Steirischer Kren PGI** is a high-quality horseradish known for its strong, tangy, long-lasting flavour, sharp, fiery kick, and distinctive aroma. Cultivation and preparation of Steirischer Kren takes place entirely within Styria using a combination of traditional methods and the latest techniques, with most of the raw materials used in production sourced in the region.

Horseradish has been added to food to spice it up since the Middle Ages, and the positive reputation of Steirischer Kren dates back some 150 years. Shaped by extinct volcanoes, the unique landscape of Vulkanland Steiermark (the Styrian

Volcano Land) in the south of Styria, provides the ideal soil for farm cultivation of the horseradish, which developed from 1940 onwards. The soil combines with the area's high humidity, relatively high precipitation, and warm temperatures during the growing season to create the perfect conditions for the horseradish. Harvesting takes place in early spring and late autumn.

Embodying Styria's rich agricultural heritage, this fresh, grated horseradish is used frequently in home cooking and gourmet dishes alike. The ideal condiment for everyday meals, it is a popular accompaniment to fish, meat, soups, salads, and snacks.



Steirischer Kren PGI, Austria

## Ptujski luk PGI from Slovenia

Cultivated for over 200 years in the Ptujsko polje area of Slovenia, **Ptujski luk PGI** is a red onion of the Ptujka rdeča variety, which is indigenous to the country. Known for its sharp, pungent flavour and strong aroma, the onion is distinguished by its flat shape, the reddish-brown to bright red colour of its dry scale leaves, and its white flesh with a purple-reddish tinge and pronounced purple edge.

Ptujski luk owes its distinctive taste to the region's shallow sandy and gravelly soil and the time-honoured methods used by growers, who

pick, sort, and pack the produce by hand and use a three-year rotation system. The favourable climate of the Ptujsko polje, with its dry wind blowing over fields nestling between hilltops, early springs and summer heat, is another essential factor in the onion's flavour.

Often sold in traditional wreaths of six or twelve onions woven with rye straw, Ptujski luk is perfect for cooking and disintegrates quickly while retaining its taste. It makes a fabulous ingredient in goulash and fresh salads. The onion also keeps well – preferably in cool, dark places.



Ptujski luk PGI, Slovenia

## Latvijas lielie pelēkie zirņi PDO from Latvia

**Latvijas lielie pelēkie zirņi PDO** (Latvian big grey peas) are traditional dried peas. They are round, with large, coarse seeds and a marbled pattern that gives them a greyish coloration when cooked. Known for their rich, nutty flavour, which comes from the skin, and their soft, creamy texture, the peas are grown using traditional methods in most parts of Latvia, often together with cereals such as oats, barley, or wheat. They have a long growing season and are typically harvested by hand.

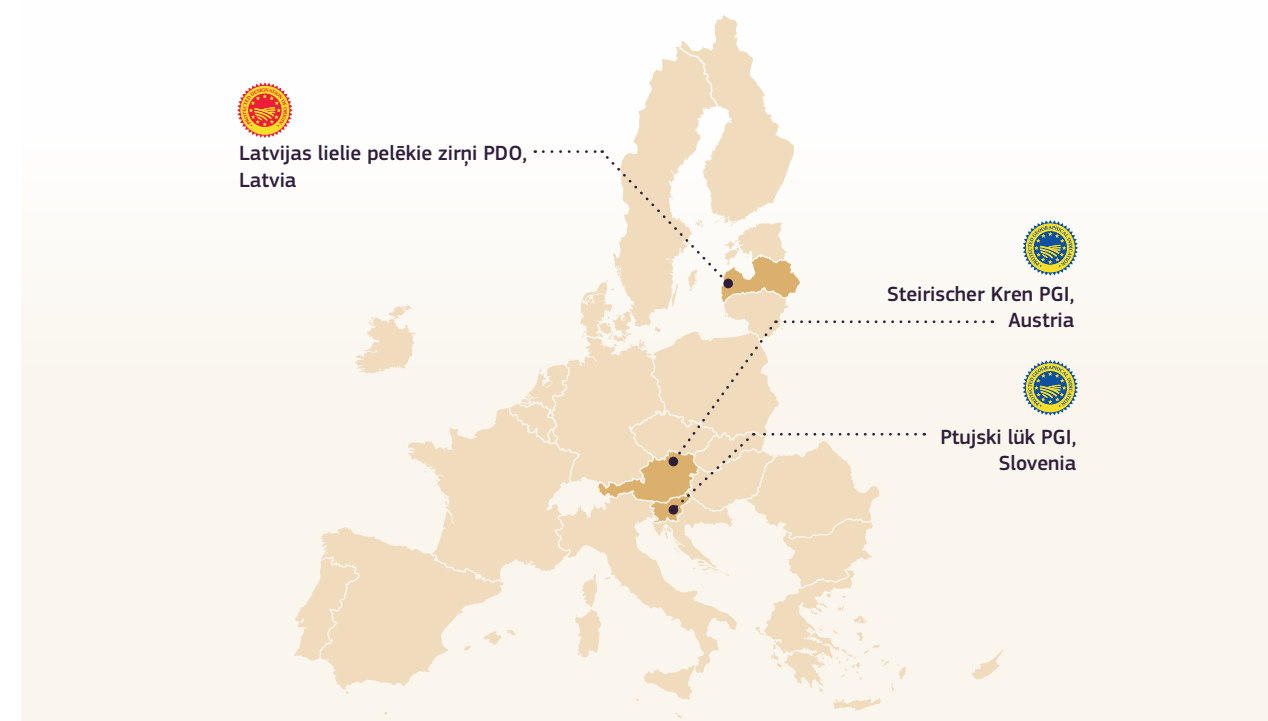
Prior to the introduction of the potato to Latvia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, peas, with their high protein

and fibre content, were, for many years, a dietary staple in the country, along with barley and beans. The good culinary qualities of Latvijas lielie pelēkie zirņi, such as their relatively short boiling time, have ensured that they retain a prominent place in Latvian cuisine.

Combined with bacon and fried onions, the peas – which are eaten without removing the seed coat – constitute a classic winter dish that is especially popular at Christmas. As well as serving as a snack food when sprinkled with salt, they are also sometimes accompanied by kefir and can even replace chickpeas in humus or falafel.



Latvijas lielie pelēkie zirņi PDO, Latvia





# Discover the People, Places, and Passions Behind Europe's Exceptional Food & drink

The pages that follow take you on a journey across Europe, far beyond what's found on supermarket shelves. Here you'll discover a world of makers – not just producers, but custodians of culture, flavour, and craft. These are the stories behind the products: the hands that shape the dough, tend the vines, stir the vats, and care for the land.



Each profile offers a glimpse into a uniquely European way of life. You'll encounter winemakers who have revitalised indigenous grape varieties once on the verge of obscurity. You'll read about cheese made from the milk of sheep grazing on windswept Mediterranean islands, where wild herbs and sea air lend an unmistakable tang. And you'll meet brewers and distillers reviving ancient techniques with a modern twist – sometimes in buildings that date back centuries, always with a view to the future. You'll also meet chocolatiers who blend Belgian heritage with Mayan cacao traditions, transforming quality cacao into chocolates that blend history and artistry.

What unites these producers is a fierce pride in origin. Whether it's a craft spirit distilled in an Estonian manor house, or a cured meat born from centuries-old Spanish know-how, every product featured here is deeply rooted in place. Many carry EU quality labels like Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), or the Organic label – as recognition of generations of dedication to craftsmanship and authenticity.

You'll encounter traditions not frozen in time, but alive and evolving. A pioneering tomato grower uses cutting-edge technology to create zero-waste, pesticide-free produce. A wood-fired bakery saved from closure now runs as a

culinary destination, teaching a new generation to roll, fire, and bake crispbread by hand. In every case, the past is not merely preserved – it's honoured, adapted, and passed on.

Sustainability, too, is more than a buzzword for these producers. It's a principle that guides every decision, from how they manage water or energy to how they treat animals, soil, and staff. Many are family businesses – small in scale but big in impact – revitalising rural economies, preserving biodiversity, and helping regions facing depopulation or climate-related challenges to thrive.

This is not mass production. This is meaningful production. Every cheese, wine, spirit, meat, or tomato you'll read about is the result of time, patience, and care. These products don't just taste good – they mean something. They carry with them the flavour of the landscape, the rhythm of the seasons, and the stories of the people who bring them to life.

So, whether you're a retailer searching for distinctive products, a chef looking to source with integrity, or a curious consumer who values provenance, prepare to be inspired. The following pages are an invitation to discover Europe's culinary heart through the real people, places and products that give EU food and drink their soul.







## Crafting Greece's Organic Winemaking Future

Nestled in the scenic region of Goumenissa, Central Macedonia, Greece, lies the Chatzivaritis Estate winery – the heartfelt legacy of founder Vagelis Chatzivaritis and his daughter, Chloi Chatzivaritis. What began as a mere hobby for Vagelis in the early 1980s, making wine just for friends and family, has blossomed into a dynamic, innovative winery celebrated for its dedication to organic viticulture and authentic Greek wines.



**Chloi Chatzivariti**  
HEAD WINEMAKER, CHATZIVARITIS ESTATE

In 1993, Vagelis planted his first vineyards, initially facing playful scepticism from his community, who considered his winemaking venture merely a pastime. Undeterred, he persevered, fuelled by his love for wine, and by 2007 he had built a boutique winery producing its first official vintage.

The estate took a significant turn when Chloi joined the family venture in 2017. After studying oenology in France and Portugal, and honing her craft in wineries across France,

New Zealand, Argentina, and Chile, Chloi returned home determined to blend traditional Greek winemaking with innovative methods she'd discovered abroad. "Traditional Greek wine-makers don't always agree with my approach," Chloi admits. Her annual visits to Georgian wineries have profoundly shaped her techniques, particularly for producing orange wines in amphoras. She says: "We're friends, and we share our best practices. I've learned so much from their techniques, and I clearly see that the taste of my wine has improved."

Embracing her identity as an independent innovator, Chloi has built a largely female-led team and emphasises meticulous cleanliness in her winery, a trait that has become something of an inside joke among her team. "They tease me sometimes because I'm always double-checking that everything is spotless," she notes with a smile. This uncompromising attention to detail significantly enhances her wine quality, helping her stand out in Greece's competitive market.

Located in a region traditionally known for its clay-rich soils and ideal for robust reds, their winery specialises in the **Γουμένισσα PDO** (Goumenissa) wine – a harmonious blend primarily composed of indigenous Xinomavro and Negoska grapes. These grapes, carefully co-fermented and aged in barrels for a minimum of twelve months, embody the unique terroir of Goumenissa.



Goumenissa PDO, Greece

Sustainability remains central to Chloi's vision. The vineyards have been certified organic since their inception and have recently embraced biodynamic practices, aiming for full certification within two years. Chloi's commitment goes beyond certifications, encompassing experimentation with techniques like carbonic maceration, pét-nat sparkling wine production, and whole-bunch pressing for whites.

Despite the challenges posed by climate change, with increasingly unpredictable weather, Chloi carefully selects grape varieties resilient to these conditions, fully transitioning to indigenous Greek varieties and abandoning previously popular international ones. This strategic shift has helped redefine Greek wines globally, presenting them as distinctive, authentic products with deep cultural roots.

The winery's commitment to sustainability and innovation has resonated well internationally, with exports accounting for up to half of their production, reaching markets in Cyprus, Canada, France, Germany, Belgium, Poland, Norway, the United States, Singapore, Taiwan, Australia, and notably the UK. The family winery has enjoyed a longstanding presence in the UK market through partnerships with prominent importers. Their international acclaim is enhanced by Chloi's openness and educational approach, regularly engaging with the global wine community to exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences.

Through Chloi's visionary leadership, combining tradition, innovation, and rigorous standards, the winery is not just preserving a family dream – it's setting new standards for sustainable, high-quality Greek winemaking on the global stage.

“Until 2010, Greece was mainly focusing on the Greek market. We had a lot of French varieties because Greek people thought whatever comes from abroad is better. The economic crisis changed this. We were obliged to export, and international markets wanted authentic Greek varieties.”



# Paški Sir PDO: A Taste of Croatian Heritage

From the windswept island of Pag in Croatia comes one of Europe's most distinctive cheeses: Paški Sir. Made exclusively from the rich milk of indigenous Pag sheep and matured using traditional methods, this hard sheep's milk cheese holds the European Union's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) label – a symbol of authenticity, heritage, and exceptional quality.



**Martina Pernar Škunca**  
PRESIDENT, PAŠKI SIR PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

**Paški Sir PDO** is more than just a delicacy; it's a reflection of the island itself. The rocky terrain and sparse vegetation of Pag may appear unforgiving, but the hardy herbs that thrive here – infused with sea salt carried by strong coastal winds – create the unique conditions that give Paški Sir its unforgettable flavour. The sheep graze freely on these aromatic plants, and their milk captures the essence of the island. Aged for six to twelve months and rubbed with olive oil during maturation, Paški Sir develops a savoury richness, combining sweet notes with a distinctive herbal salinity.

To earn the prestigious PDO label, every step of Paški Sir's production must follow a strict set of rules. The cheese can only be produced on Pag Island, using milk exclusively from locally raised sheep. The entire process – from milking to maturation – is tightly monitored to ensure consistency and adherence to traditional methods. Independent inspectors regularly visit production sites, laboratory tests are conducted to confirm safety and composition, and panels of expert tasters assess flavour and texture.

This rigorous approach ensures that Paški Sir meets the highest EU standards for quality and safety, while preserving the artisanal character that has made it Croatia's most awarded and recognised cheese. The oldest written mention of Paški Sir dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but oral traditions stretch even further. Originally produced in the island's highlands by men, the craft of cheesemaking gradually moved into towns and villages in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where it became primarily the work of women – many of whom continue to lead production today.

For Martina Pernar Škunca, President of the Paški Sir Producers Association, the heart of the cheese's story lies in the resilience of the island and its sheep. "Our Pag sheep is a super animal," she says with a smile. "She's small, but she survives the harshest conditions – eating little, but only the best: aromatic herbs dusted with sea salt from the strong Bora wind." The production season from January to July is a test of endurance for shepherds, who rise before dawn to milk twice a day, even in the biting winter wind that "feels like it reaches your bones." It is hard, unrelenting work, but, as Martina explains: "This cheese contains the essence of our island. That's the real secret."

Today, Paški Sir is produced by several small, often family-run dairies across the island, many of which combine generations of experience with modern techniques to protect and enhance the product's quality. These producers are deeply committed to their land and heritage, and the PDO system allows them to preserve traditional knowledge while securing a premium market position in Europe and beyond.

“For us on Pag, Paški Sir is more than food, it's more than cheese – it's a part of our identity, part of our tradition. The PDO mark means this cheese is truly unique and can only be made here.”



Paški Sir PDO, Croatia



# Organic Meats that Preserve Rural Rioja's Character

Situated in the Ocón Valley, in the Spanish region of Rioja, is the El Encinar estate, home of Luis Gil, producers of fresh and cured meats from Duroc pigs. The company places great emphasis on sustainability, and all of its meats carry the EU Organic logo.

Today, Delia and Rosa Gil run the business, alongside their father Luis, but its roots go back to the 1920s, when their great-grandmother, María, began raising livestock and delivering meat and homemade sausages to local families. María's son, Luis founded the family butcher's shop in the 1950s, and his son, Luis Junior, opened a meat factory in the 1980s.

In 2003, the firm launched its ecological livestock project, initially raising 69 pigs. It has since expanded considerably. About 1,000 pigs are now reared on the estate each year in a manner that respects their welfare. They can roam around nearly 100 hectares of woodland and have 120 m<sup>2</sup> of space each, far more than the minimum requirement for organic livestock.

The estate's location in a UNESCO biosphere reserve further contributes to the pigs' welfare. Being in a remote spot, far from other farms, lowers the risk of disease.

"Our Duroc piglets live in freedom, with access to food and water and plenty of space to walk and enjoy the outdoors among the holm oaks, which encourages slow growth.



**Delia Gil** (at right)  
FINANCIAL DIRECTOR, EMBUTIDOS LUIS GIL  
**Rosa Gil**  
HEAD OF EXPORTS, EMBUTIDOS LUIS GIL

This results in meat of excellent quality, with high marbling and high levels of oleic acid," says Delia.

Based on traditional family methods, the curing of products like chorizo, salchichón, and ham ensures slow maturation and blending of flavours. Offered in various cuts, Delia's fresh meat is prized for its juicy texture and intense taste. It has a higher protein and vitamin content than most meat and similar nutritional values to Ibérico pork, though it is less fatty. Moreover, the meats are free from additives, preservatives, and genetically modified organisms, and suitable for people with gluten or lactose intolerance.

Activity on the estate aligns with the biosphere reserve principles, which integrate conservation with socio-culturally and

environmentally sustainable economic development. The Gil family aims to preserve soil fertility through optimal resource use, maintain ecosystems – particularly the oak groves where the piglets live – and balance livestock numbers with food availability.

The pigs' diet consists of acorns, roots, and feed made from organic cereals – all from the estate to reduce the carbon footprint. No chemicals are applied in the cultivation of the cereals, minimising soil and water pollution. Instead, the pigs' manure serves as fertiliser. Also, the administration of antibiotics during rearing is avoided.

To improve biodiversity, they have begun making use of different crops, resulting in the addition of organic extra virgin olive oil to their product range.

The company limits emissions by running solely on renewable energy. It has installed photovoltaic panels on the roof of its meat factory, saving around 36,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year.

Water management is another priority. Ponds on the estate collect rainwater for the animals to drink and for crop irrigation, while all wastewater from the factory is reused.

Having long suffered from depopulation, the Ocón Valley has gained social and economic benefits from the estate. It defends traditional ways of life and creates jobs, helping people stay in the area. It also generates tourism, which has played a part in the opening of new restaurants. Furthermore, Delia and Rosa have supported local initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles.

The Gil family's integrated model of organic meat production offers inspiration for producers seeking to combine environmental responsibility with high-quality output. By closing resource loops and relying entirely on estate-grown feed, the company reduces its carbon footprint while ensuring full traceability – key elements for modern supply chains.

With each bite of their meat, you're tasting something that not only preserves the environment, economy, and way of life of a beautiful part of the Spanish countryside, but also demonstrates how organic farming can deliver both excellence and sustainability in today's agri-food sector.

"Sustainability isn't a trend for us – it's our foundation. With a closed-loop model on our estate, we manage everything from feed to waste, reducing environmental impact and ensuring full traceability.





# Cologne's Brewing Spirit Since 1830

Tucked in the heart of Cologne, Köln Brewery comprises Sünner Brewery, the oldest brewery in Cologne – established in 1830 – and Brauerei zur Malzmühle, which was set up in 1858. Today, the brewery continues to craft its signature Sünner Kölsch using traditional methods, regional ingredients, and water from its very own well.



**Martin Sittkus**  
MASTER BREWER,  
BRAUEREI ZUR MALZMÜHLE

Originally located near the Rhine, the brewery began life in the cellar of a small house. Above it lived the apprentices, brewers, and owner – a vertical community of craftsmanship. As Cologne industrialised, the brewery moved to its current site in the city's Kalk district, formerly a coal mining area. Remarkably, it still uses water drawn from the site's original well.

"Even back in the days when the Rhine was heavily polluted, our well water stayed pristine. It comes from the Bergisches Land, a rural area with no big cities, so it's incredibly pure," says Martin Sittkus, the brewery's master brewer.

That water is central to the taste and character of Sünner **Kölsch PGI**, which must be brewed within Cologne and in line with the Kölsch Konvention, a regional agreement that sets rigorous standards. The brewery's beer is brewed under the German purity law using only water, barley, hops, and yeast. "There's no room for shortcuts. When your ingredients list is so short, they have to be the best," says Sittkus.

The brewery works with local suppliers whenever possible. Hops come from Hallertau in Bavaria, malt from within 70 kilometres of Cologne, and yeast is cultivated in-house in a

lab using cryogenic storage. Even the water is gently treated on-site via reverse osmosis to reduce calcium and make it perfect for brewing.

But what truly defines Kölsch – and the brewery's place in Cologne's culture – goes beyond ingredients and methods. "You can export the beer, but you can't export the lifestyle," Sittkus explains. In Cologne, Kölsch is more than a drink, it's a ritual. Served in slender 200ml glasses called Kölschstangen, the beer is meant to be drunk fresh and fast, with waiters replacing empty glasses automatically until the drinker places a coaster on top to signal they've had enough.

The brewery honours this tradition in its own brewhouse, where beer is still tapped directly from gravity-fed barrels placed atop the counter. The brewery also offers 10-litre barrels for home use, allowing locals to recreate the experience with friends and family.

This deep connection to place and community is reflected in the brewery's approach to sustainability. Energy recovery systems reduce waste, and a focus on local sourcing minimises environmental impact. Modern food safety practices are integrated into production while preserving the artisanal nature of the craft.

Although the brewery has not yet made a commercial entry into the UK, it sees promise in the market. "It's an easy-drinking, highly carbonated beer that fits perfectly with the British pub culture," says Sittkus. There is already a taste for Kölsch in Scandinavia, where a Cologne-style bar in Malmö has successfully replicated the full experience, complete with beer replacements and traditional menus.

While the brewing methods remain rooted in tradition, the brewery continues to evolve, adapting new technologies like modern CIP (clean-in-place) systems to ensure hygiene and efficiency without compromising on flavour.

For UK importers looking to bring a genuine taste of Cologne to their shelves or taps, Malzmühle offers more than just beer, it offers heritage, craftsmanship, and an entire cultural experience.



Kölsch PGI, Germany

“It's not just about the beer – it's about the lifestyle and the culture connected to it.”





## Reviving Estonia's Vodka Heritage

In the heart of Estonia, a revival is quietly taking place. Manor Spirits, a distillery founded in 2018 by British entrepreneur Gareth Niblett, is not just producing vodka and other spirits – it's reigniting a deep-rooted cultural tradition. Born from research into their manor, Võhmuta (Wechmuth), first recorded in 1519, the distillery represents the perfect fusion of history, craftsmanship, and innovation.



**Gareth Niblett**  
FOUNDER & DISTILLER, MANOR SPIRITS

Estonia has long held a special reverence for vodka. Distilling records date back to 1485; and in 1765, Russian Empress Catherine the Great granted exclusive distilling rights to local nobility. These manors became epicentres of artisanal spirits. The distillery honours this past, producing small-batch vodka with an uncompromising commitment to authenticity.

Manor Spirits is Estonia's only craft producer of pure spirits and grain-to-glass **Estonian vodka PGI**, spirit made exclusively from local grains and water. Its signature vodka pays homage to the region's manor-born heritage, with vodkas crafted from distinctive local ingredients such as rye – Estonia's national grain – in particular the world's oldest variety, 'Sangaste', bred in 1875 to withstand the Baltic cold.

This devotion to local ingredients goes beyond rye. All the grains used in producing the vodka are sourced from certified organic Estonian farms, while wild botanicals such as spruce shoots, sea buckthorn, and rowan berries are handpicked to reflect the country's rich seasonal bounty.

Innovation meets tradition in the distillery's cutting-edge production methods. A high-tech hybrid still allows for extraordinary temperature control, enabling a rare two-pass distillation that retains flavour and character without the need for filtration. This is vodka as it was once made – potent, complex, and full of personality.

The Põhjaka product line, acquired in 2023, builds on this philosophy, with spirits that evoke the flavours and aromas of Estonia's forests and orchards through the use of locally foraged botanicals. The range has garnered acclaim, earning awards such as 'Best Christmas Drink' and multiple recognitions in their respective category, including 'Best Estonian Drink'.

Estonian vodka is produced with a deep commitment to sustainability. Crafted using 100% renewable energy and packaged entirely without single-use plastic, its production process is designed to minimise environmental impact. Labels are printed on cotton paper, bottles are made for reuse, and shrink seals are biodegradable. Even the shipping materials and bags, made from recycled cardboard and fallen leaves, reflect a holistic approach to eco-conscious production.

Yet despite international success across Europe, Estonian Vodka is still largely unknown in the UK – something Gareth hopes to change. "As a British family running an Estonian distillery, it's time to bring this story full circle. British drinkers deserve to taste what authentic craft vodka really is."

With accolades from the London Spirits Competition and high Falstaff ratings, the distillery has carved out a niche among discerning consumers looking for substance and story over slick branding, as a result of which their unfiltered vodka has found fans across Denmark and Germany.

Today, the distillery remains a family-run craft operation. From selecting the grain to designing the bottle, every step is managed in-house. It's this hands-on approach that ensures each bottle carries the essence of Estonia's land, history, and culture. For UK importers and high-end retailers seeking spirits that combine tradition, terroir, and trailblazing quality, Estonian Vodka offers something rare: a genuine story in every glass.

“It's not just about making vodka. It's about reviving the stories, the flavours, and the soul of Estonian distilling.”



Estonian vodka PGI, Estonia



# Sustainable Tomato Farming in Slovakia: A Case Study in Innovation

Located in the lush countryside of Kameničany, Slovakia, Farma Kameničany stands as a leading example of how innovation and nature can harmoniously coexist. Co-founded by CEO Jiří Stodůlka, the farm began its remarkable journey in 2014 by transforming a neglected brownfield site into one of Slovakia's most modern greenhouse facilities, recognised for its sustainable approach to tomato cultivation.



**Jiří Stodůlka**  
CEO & CO-FOUNDER, FARMA KAMENIČANY

At Farma Kameničany, sustainability is more than a goal; it's the essence of the operation. Driven by a vision of 'zero compromise' on flavour, carbon footprint, and environmental impact, the farm produces delectable cherry tomatoes using a pioneering approach that marries high-tech solutions with natural farming techniques. Its commitment to sustainability is clear: employing a closed-loop irrigation system ensures 100% recycling of water and fertilisers, while the use of organic, compostable substrates aligns perfectly with EU directives for sustainable agriculture.

One of the farm's standout innovations is its commitment to pesticide-free farming. Instead of conventional pesticides, the farm uses biological pest control methods, meticulously balancing the ecosystem within their greenhouse. According to Jiří, "We believe that integrating advanced technology with sustainable practices is essential to cultivating tomatoes that are both flavourful and environmentally responsible."

The facility's environmental consciousness extends to energy use. The farm relies on renewable electricity and heat sourced entirely from an on-site biogas plant, which converts organic waste from both the farm and local retailers into clean, renewable energy. This innovative energy system not only powers LED lighting for year-round tomato cultivation but also exemplifies a genuine zero-waste, circular economy.

Reflecting its commitment to local communities, the farm actively contributes to reducing unemployment and inequality by providing meaningful, local employment opportunities. Additionally, the farm's dedication to public health is driven by research highlighting the negative impacts of pesticides. By committing to zero residues, the farm ensures consumers can trust in the purity and safety of their products.

The farm's influence has grown beyond Slovakia's borders, with its sister farm, Farma Bezdíněk in Czechia, adopting similar groundbreaking sustainable methods and technological innovations. Together, these sister farms illustrate a future-oriented vision for agriculture in the EU – one that prioritises environmental responsibility, community welfare, and uncompromising quality.

The farm's relentless pursuit of innovation extends beyond production methods into ongoing research and collaboration with scientific institutions. Through partnerships and continuous improvement initiatives, the farm regularly explores new techniques in sustainable agriculture, ensuring that its

“Using biological pesticides means constant monitoring of our crops. It's a precise and sensitive method that ensures we maintain a healthy balance between pests and plants, guaranteeing the safety and quality of our tomatoes for consumers.”







# Crafting Belgian Chocolate with Royal Heritage and Mayan Roots

Belgium has long been celebrated for its chocolate, a national treasure renowned for craftsmanship, refinement, and depth of flavour. Among the country's most storied chocolatiers stands Mary, a company that not only honours this tradition but continues to redefine it through a unique blend of heritage, terroir, and ethical responsibility.



Olivier Borgerhoff  
CEO, MARY

Founded in 1919 by pioneering artisan Mary Delluc, the company's journey began in the heart of Brussels, where handmade pralines and truffles were sold from an elegant boutique on Rue Royale. Just below the shop, Delluc's workshop served as the cradle of a now-iconic Belgian brand – one synonymous with elegance, artisanal methods, and the pursuit of perfection. Over the decades, this legacy of excellence has remained intact, earning the company the prestigious title of Royal Warrant Holder to the Belgian Court, a recognition first awarded in 1942 and since renewed multiple times.

Yet tradition here is never static. In recent years, the company has woven its century-old Belgian identity with a bold and distinctive origin story – one that begins over 8,000 kilometres

away in the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico. There, nestled near the ancient Mayan temples, lies its very own cocoa plantation. The soil is rich, the climate ideal, and the cultural heritage profound. From this land grows the rare Criollo cocoa bean – known as the 'queen of cacaos' for its delicate complexity and refined flavour.

Criollo beans account for just 5% of the world's cocoa production. Fragile and low-yielding, they are typically avoided by large-scale producers. But for this chocolatier, rarity is not an obstacle – it's a signature. Uniquely, all Criollo beans used are grown on the company's own plantation, ensuring full traceability, quality control, and a deeper connection to the source.

This connection goes beyond ingredients. Working in partnership with the local Mayan community of Tikul, the company upholds sustainable farming traditions passed down through generations. The cultivation process includes tree-to-bean methods and even sacred rituals performed by the local shaman – a ceremonial blessing that honours cacao as a plant of spiritual significance. In turn, the company ensures fair wages and invests in improving community infrastructure, housing, and recreational spaces.

Once harvested and transported to Belgium, the beans are transformed in the company's Brussels atelier, where each chocolate is crafted by hand according to traditional methods. Around 80% of the product range remains based on original recipes, some dating back more than a century. Yet behind this timeless elegance lies a firm embrace of modern food safety and quality. The facility is Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) compliant – a system focused on preventing hazards rather than relying solely on end-product testing – and has achieved Food Safety System Certification 22000 (FSSC 22000).

Innovation and sustainability are ever-present. Solar panels power the Ganshoren production site, efficient stock management minimises waste, and the cocoa plantation supports biodiversity through a dedicated nursery.

The result is chocolate that is not only exquisitely crafted, but also deeply authentic. As CEO Olivier Borgerhoff puts it: "Our chocolatiers meticulously select each ingredient to achieve perfect harmony in flavours, textures, aromas, and presentation." It's this balance – between past and present, origin and destination – that defines the essence of the product.

“We are very proud to have been the first chocolate house to receive the prestigious designation of Breveted Royal Warrant Holder in our domain, a distinction we first obtained in 1942. This honour has since been renewed on four occasions, and to this day our products continue to be highly appreciated by the Belgian royal family.”





# Keeping Sweden's Crispbread Tradition Alive

In the town of Stora Skedvi, in Sweden's Dalarna County, lies the Skedvi Bröd bakery, which is continuing the local tradition of production of Skedvi Bröd PGI, a quintessentially Swedish crispbread. Once seen as a poor person's food that kept well during cold winters, it is now eaten everywhere from log cabins to castles.



**Anders Åkerberg**  
FOUNDER AND CEO, SKEDVI BRÖD AB

Stora Skedvi's bakery had been an institution in the town since the 1950s. Initially, many types of bread were baked there. During the 1970s, the bakery began to focus solely on crispbread, which was baked in wood-fired ovens.

When, in 2013, production moved to another site, where the crispbread would be baked in electric ovens, many people lost access to a foodstuff they had enjoyed their entire lives. However, the news led entrepreneur Anders Åkerberg to spring into action.

Anders had a shop selling local food in the bakery building. As the closure posed an existential threat to his business, he decided to buy the bakery. But with all of the equipment having been removed from the building, he needed help.

It came through a crowdfunding campaign. In all, 733 people made donations, while construction companies contributed time, materials, and expertise.

Although the crowdfunding made possible the production of four wood-fired ovens, further financing was necessary. Anders embarked on an equity round, offering potential investors part ownership of the company.

When tradition is threatened, resistance often comes from influential sources. Anders answered the phone one day to hear the voice of Benny Andersson of ABBA. Having grown up with crispbread, Benny was keen to help get the bakery back on its feet. As well as investing, he baked the symbolic first loaf at the grand reopening in December 2014. Since then, **Skedvi Bröd PGI** has been served at ABBA's virtual concerts in London.

Following the reopening, Skedvi Bröd lovers were queuing up to buy their favourite bread, and many workers from the old bakery were rehired. Today, the business is the last wood-fired bakery of its kind in Sweden and has received royal approval. Holding the title of Purveyor to the Royal Court of Sweden, it can supply crispbread to the Court.

Containing only flour, yeast, salt and water from a nearby glacial stream, Skedvi Bröd has a robust texture thanks to its manual production process. Baking in a wood-fired oven lends it its characteristic dry coniferous forest aroma and its rich and slightly bitter toasted flour flavour.

Sustainability is a company watchword, with the wood used in the ovens sourced from local forests and the ovens providing heat for the whole bakery. Transfer of waste heat to the on-site greenhouse and a hotel are potential next steps. The bakery is run on a zero-waste basis: bread that is no good to eat is used for distillation of spirits like akvavit and gin.

Along with the bakery, greenhouse, and shop, the site houses a restaurant, a dairy and guest accommodation. Rather than just selling bread to visitors, Anders gives them an immersive experience. They can watch the bread being baked and taste it in the restaurant, with the smell a key factor in enticing them to reach for their wallets. There are even plans to let customers make bread themselves.

“Skedvi Bröd isn't just crispbread – it's a living piece of Swedish heritage. By bringing back the wood-fired ovens, we didn't just restore a flavour – we revived a tradition. What began as an adventure to save a bakery has become a destination for culture, craft, and community.”



Skedvi Bröd PGI, Sweden



## Testimonials

from UK F&B Experts

# A Taste of Expertise: What UK Specialists Say about EU Food & Drink



British consumers are becoming increasingly curious and discerning when it comes to food and drink. From behind the counters of delis and drinks retailers to the menus of restaurants and pubs, there is a growing appetite for products that tell a story, reflect craftsmanship, and offer something unique.

This is where the European Union shines.

The following pages bring together insights from leading UK experts across a wide spectrum of food and drink – from beer, wine, and spirits to bakery, cheese, confectionery, meat, and fresh produce. Each testimonial provides a professional perspective on why EU products continue to make such a strong impression on the UK market. Their verdicts are based on deep industry knowledge, years of hands-on experience, and direct engagement with EU producers and their products.

What becomes immediately clear is that quality is never a coincidence. Whether it's the time-honoured cheesemaking techniques of the Alpine regions, the delicate patisserie traditions of France, or the meticulous approach to distilling in Poland and Italy, these products are rooted in regional pride, regulated standards, and a culture of constant innovation. EU schemes such as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) give retailers and consumers alike confidence in origin, method and integrity.

Just as importantly, these expert voices highlight the versatility and opportunity that EU food and drink presents for the UK market. They share pairing recommendations, sourcing tips, and insights into sustainability, tradition, and consumer trends, revealing why European products belong not just on shelves, but also on menus, in kitchens, and in conversations.

Retailers, chefs, buyers, and food enthusiasts alike will find in this collection a compelling reminder: European food and drink is more than a purchase – it's a partnership in quality, creativity, and cultural richness. We invite you to explore their stories, savour their recommendations, and be inspired by their shared passion for excellence.





## Vintage Europe: The Authentic Story Behind Every Bottle



Neil McAndrew

WINE INDUSTRY CONSULTANT AND ADVISOR TO THE  
EU'S 'MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK' CAMPAIGN

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Having worked in the UK wine industry for over three decades, I've witnessed first-hand how consumer tastes have evolved and grown more sophisticated. My time in the UK retail sector gave me a deep appreciation for the extraordinary diversity and richness that European wines bring to the table.

When we speak about EU wines, we're not merely talking about beverages; we're sharing stories of tradition, heritage, and craftsmanship passed down through generations. The beauty of European wine lies precisely in this extraordinary depth and variety – reflected powerfully through the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) systems.

Europe remains the world's largest producer, consumer, and exporter of wine, and it's not hard to see why. Over 65% of EU vineyards produce wines under the PDO classification, with another significant proportion under PGI. These aren't simply labels; they're assurances of authenticity, safety, quality, and sustainability that lead the world.

During a recent roundtable organised under the 'More Than Only Food & Drink' campaign, I was reminded again of the incredible scope European wine has to offer. The wines we sampled – from the elegant floral notes of Italy's **Franciacorta PDO** and the deep spicy notes of Hungary's **Sopron PDO** to

the vibrant citrus of Croatia's **Hrvatska Istra PDO** – illustrated beautifully how each bottle is a unique testament to its terroir.

PDO wines, such as those from France's celebrated regions, must exclusively use grapes grown within their clearly defined geographical area. This rigid criterion helps protect traditions and maintain the distinct character of these wines. On the other hand, the PGI classification allows for greater innovation, requiring only 85% of grapes to originate from the designated area. This flexibility means producers can experiment and innovate, continually enriching the wine landscape.

But the importance of these designations goes beyond mere regulation; they represent the EU's profound commitment to sustainability. As consumer consciousness grows around environmental impact, the EU is taking significant steps to embed sustainability within its PDO and PGI systems. Organic and sustainable practices are not just trends – they're essential. Ensuring sustainability preserves the future of high-quality EU wines, something increasingly recognised by discerning UK consumers.



Franciacorta PDO, Italy

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The beauty of European wine lies precisely in this extraordinary depth and variety – reflected powerfully through the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) systems.

I've had the privilege of travelling across Europe's wine regions – from the steep terraces of the Douro Valley to the lesser-known but hugely promising vineyards of Naoussa in Greece and the Struma Valley in Bulgaria. Each visit reinforces my belief that EU wines are not just diverse; they are deeply rooted in culture, craft, and a sense of place. You don't just taste the wine; you feel the land and hear the story.

Closer to home, I've witnessed that same spark of discovery at tastings with UK buyers and sommeliers. There's genuine excitement when someone tries a Furmint from Hungary or a Malvasia from Croatia for the first time, often followed by, "Why haven't I seen this before?" These are wines that surprise, delight, and stick in the memory. And once introduced, they often earn a permanent place on wine lists, especially when there's a compelling story behind the bottle.

What excites me most is the growing curiosity of UK consumers. Younger drinkers, in particular, are turning away from the familiar and actively seeking something new – wines that speak of authenticity, sustainability, and heritage. Many have travelled through Europe themselves, returning with fond memories of a local wine enjoyed in a small taverna or hillside restaurant. Offering them that same wine back home is a powerful way to reconnect experience with product.

Promoting EU wine in the UK is about deepening connection. Every bottle from the EU, whether it carries a PDO or PGI label or comes from an up-and-coming organic producer, represents something more than flavour. It's a testament to careful stewardship of land, generational knowledge, and a commitment to quality and sustainability. And in a market that increasingly values those qualities, that's a story well worth telling.





# Fresh from the Continent: Why EU Produce Belongs on UK Plates



Veryan Bliss

AGRICULTURAL AND FRESH PRODUCE CONSULTANT,  
SUSTAINABILITY ADVOCATE, AND ADVISOR TO  
THE EU'S 'MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK' CAMPAIGN

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With over 30 years of experience in senior technical and commercial roles within global fresh produce supply chains, including collaborations with leading UK retailers and sector boards, I've had the privilege of witnessing the evolution of food systems across continents. One thing has remained consistently true: the European Union remains one of the most trusted sources of high-quality, safe, and sustainable fruit and vegetables in the world.

The UK's fresh produce sector is dynamic and fiercely competitive, but our proximity to the EU gives us access to an unparalleled range of fruit and vegetables that meet – and often exceed – our expectations for flavour, quality and traceability. In an age where consumers are demanding more from their food<sup>26</sup> – not just in taste, but in provenance and environmental impact – the EU delivers on all fronts.

Through my work as an advisor to the EU's 'More Than Only Food & Drink' campaign, I've seen how committed Member States are to supporting UK food professionals with not only outstanding produce, but also the tools and insight they need to meet evolving market demands. From Spain's juicy citrus to the Netherlands' expertly cultivated tomatoes, EU growers are delivering fresh produce that reflects both agricultural excellence and responsible farming practices.

What sets EU produce apart is the assurance of safety and traceability that comes from the bloc's rigorous food safety framework, governed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and General Food Law Regulation.<sup>27</sup> These systems ensure that every apple, salad leaf, or courgette is grown to meet stringent safety standards – reducing the risk of pesticide residues or contaminants and giving UK importers and retailers the confidence they need.

Beyond safety, the EU's quality schemes – like Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) – preserve regional farming traditions and guarantee authenticity. These designations are more than labels: they're a mark of cultural heritage and farming excellence.

Examples include **Pruneaux d'Agen PGI** prunes from France and **Korinthiaki Stafida Vostitsa PDO** raisins from Greece, both celebrated for their unique qualities rooted in regional expertise.

# Fruits & Vegetables



Pruneaux d'Agen PGI, France

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To maintain their position in the UK market amid rising global competition, EU producers must continue doing what they do best: delivering premium produce that combines flavour, freshness, and transparency.

Sustainability, too, is a core part of the EU's offer. With strong Environmental and Social Governance (ESG)<sup>28</sup> standards and robust employment regulations, EU-grown fruit and vegetables are produced in systems that prioritise environmental responsibility and fair working conditions. These values matter to consumers – and increasingly, they influence purchasing decisions in both retail and foodservice.

Let's not overlook logistics either. With its advanced cool chain infrastructure and geographical proximity, the EU can reliably supply the UK with ultra-fresh produce throughout the year. As climate change and supply chain resilience become growing concerns, sourcing closer to home from trusted partners makes both environmental and commercial sense.

Yes, Brexit has introduced new challenges, from paperwork to border checks. But thanks to initiatives such as successful lobbying by the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC), the UK's trade association for the fresh produce and cut flower industry, on customs classifications, and the preparedness of experienced freight forwarders, much of the potential disruption has been mitigated. Planning and partnerships are more critical than ever – but the fundamentals remain strong.

To maintain their position in the UK market amid rising global competition, EU producers must continue doing what they do best: delivering premium produce that combines flavour, freshness, and transparency. The UK's consumers may not always recognise EU origins on the shelf, but with greater emphasis on storytelling, seasonality, and regional identity, this can change. Ultimately, European fresh produce isn't just food – it's a promise of quality, safety, and sustainability.



Korinthiaki Stafida Vostitsa PDO, Greece





# Beyond the Cheese Board: Discovering Europe's Culinary Heritage

Patrick McGuigan

CHEESE WRITER, EDUCATOR AND ADVISOR TO THE EU'S 'MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK' CAMPAIGN



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Having spent over 15 years immersed in the cheese industry as a writer, educator, and senior judge at the World Cheese Awards, I've explored countless flavours, textures, and traditions from around the world. Yet, European cheeses continually inspire and surprise me, offering a depth of history, tradition, and craftsmanship that has long resonated with British people.

Cheese isn't just food – it's woven deeply into our culinary and social fabric. With the UK's annual consumption standing at 11.5 kilograms per person,<sup>29</sup> it's clear that cheese remains an integral part of our diets and traditions. As one of the world's largest cheese importers, Britain eagerly embraces diverse European varieties. Indeed, the UK's imports of EU cheeses continue to grow, reflecting an evolving appetite for foods from other countries.

Social media has undeniably transformed our culinary landscape, driving fresh interest in home cooking and encouraging people to experiment creatively with cheese. Viral recipes such as baked Greek **Feta PDO** pasta have not only captured imaginations but also introduced classic European cheeses to new audiences. This trend is fuelling interest in traditional

ingredients, such as **Pecorino Romano PDO** in authentic Italian dishes or **Mont d'Or / Vacherin du Haut-Doubs PDO** from France for baking.

Looking ahead, I predict cheeses from northern and central Europe will capture greater attention in the UK market, as more consumers discover these lesser known yet exceptional varieties. Cheeses like Belgium's **Fromage de Herve PDO** – a buttery, pungent cheese with sweet undertones – and Germany's remarkable **Hornkäse**, a mountain cheese washed in elderflower and hay ash, are good examples of some of Europe's undiscovered gems. There are also visually stunning varieties such as **Banon PDO** from France, wrapped in chestnut leaves, or Austria's floral-coated **Tiny Blossom** cheese and **Fleur de Maquis**, a ewes' milk cheese coated in wild herbs from Corsica.

# Cheese

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Ultimately, what makes European cheeses extraordinary are their powerful connection to place, tradition, and creativity. Europe's cheesemakers continue to uphold age-old techniques while embracing new trends.



Feta PDO, Greece



Mont d'Or / Vacherin du Haut-Doubs PDO, France



Gorgonzola PDO, Italy

I'm particularly fascinated by unique cheeses that tell a story of their origin and production methods. Belgium's **Cabriolait**, an organic goat's milk cheese with earthy caramel notes, perfectly showcases this blend of tradition and innovation – made using age-old fermentation techniques but matured in a modern, eco-friendly facility. Likewise, Greek cheeses such as **Graviera Kritis PDO** and creamy **Galotyri PDO** stand out for their distinctive textures, intense flavours, and deep-rooted cultural heritage, reflecting centuries-old pastoral traditions and regional cheesemaking customs.

When it comes to pairing, it's time for enthusiasts to broaden their horizons beyond the classic cheese and crackers. Combining cheeses with sweet jams, marmalades, or even chocolate biscuits – such as Italian **Gorgonzola PDO** paired with dark chocolate digestives – can create exciting new taste experiences. Local wines or Belgian beers complement these cheeses beautifully, enhancing their distinct flavour profiles and regional characteristics. Sparkling wines, including **Champagne PDO**, **Cava PDO**, and **Prosecco PDO**, are great companions to rich, creamy, or blue cheeses.

Ultimately, what makes European cheeses extraordinary are their powerful connection to place, tradition, and creativity. Europe's cheesemakers continue to uphold age-old techniques while embracing new trends. As we embrace these exciting varieties and pairings, we're not just discovering new flavours – we're celebrating Europe's rich dairy heritage, ensuring cheese remains part of our culinary culture.





## The Art of the Oven: Why EU Baked Goods Rise Above the Rest



Simon Atkins

BAKERY CONSULTANT, INDUSTRY EXPERT,  
AND ADVISOR TO THE EU'S 'MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK' CAMPAIGN

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With over 30 years' experience in the bakery and foodservice industry – advising major high-street brands and consulting on innovation, sourcing, and customer experience – I've come to recognise one truth: European baked goods are simply in a league of their own. From crusty sourdoughs to delicate patisserie, EU producers combine centuries-old craft with a constant drive to innovate. It's that fusion of heritage and forward-thinking that makes them such a vital source of inspiration and supply for the UK market.

European bread and bakery culture is not just about food – it's about identity, place and tradition. Each region has something unique to offer. Think of a chewy German pretzel, a flaky French croissant, or a dense, seedy Scandinavian rye. These aren't generic products – they're regional signatures, often protected by EU schemes like Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), which assure both quality and authenticity.

And let's be clear: British consumers notice the difference. In my work with retailers and hospitality clients, I've seen time and again that baked goods with provenance and story capture attention and drive repeat purchase. From rustic Italian Pane Toscano PDO, crafted with soft wheat flour and natural yeast, or Sweden's Upplandskubb PDO, uniquely boiled rather than baked, to the dark, delicate flavours of Lithuania's Daujėnų naminė duona PGI rye bread, or the indulgent Portuguese pastel

de nata, these products each bring something distinctive to the table.

What's exciting is how EU producers continue to evolve. They're not standing still. Across Europe, we're seeing bakeries embrace clean-label formulations, ancient grains, sourdough starters and low-GI flours – all in response to growing consumer demand for health-conscious choices without compromising taste.<sup>30</sup> The level of skill and care going into these products is phenomenal.

For foodservice operators in the UK, sourcing from the EU means accessing a level of consistency and quality that is hard to match. Frozen par-baked goods from the European Union, for instance, offer outstanding flavour and texture, while allowing chefs and caterers to serve fresh, warm bread with minimal prep. That's a win-win: operational ease with no sacrifice on taste.



Daujėnų naminė duona PGI, Lithuania

# Bakery

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As British tastes continue to diversify and mature, EU baked goods are perfectly placed to complement and expand that tradition.

There's also been a real resurgence in the celebration of slow fermentation and traditional techniques. European bakers are leading this movement. In cities like Paris, Vienna, or Copenhagen, artisan bakeries are producing breads with deep, complex flavour and remarkable shelf life thanks to natural fermentation. And UK consumers are more than ready for that quality – they're seeking out breads that feel real, rustic and honest.

Britain has a proud and diverse baking heritage, from scones, parkin, and Victoria sponge to hearty loaves and crumpets. As British tastes continue to diversify and mature, EU baked goods are perfectly placed to complement and expand that tradition. We're seeing greater openness to spelt, buckwheat, rye and even chickpea-based flours. There's room for indulgence, too – think laminated doughs, fine patisserie, and enriched doughs with fruit and spice. It's not about replacing British baking but enhancing what's on offer through European excellence.

In short, EU bread and bakery products offer the full package: provenance, flavour, story, innovation, and consistency. That's why I often recommend them to my clients. They elevate menus, inspire creativity, and meet the rising expectations of today's discerning consumer. Whether you're a retailer, chef, or hospitality buyer, turning to the EU for baked goods is a decision you – and your customers – won't regret.





## Sweet Innovation: The Timeless Appeal of EU Confectionery

Katharine Shipley

CONFECTIONERY INDUSTRY EXPERT, CONSULTANT,  
AND ADVISOR TO THE EU'S 'MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK' CAMPAIGN



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**With nearly two decades of experience in food innovation and brand development, I've seen how confectionery continues to captivate and delight consumers across Britain. The ever-changing landscape of consumer preferences, driven by nostalgia and innovation, presents exciting challenges and opportunities – particularly when it comes to sourcing distinctive and quality products. For British confectionery buyers, the European Union remains a treasure trove of creativity, tradition, and exceptional quality.**

One aspect I particularly admire about EU confectionery is its unwavering ability to innovate. While chocolate often dominates British perceptions of sweets, it's actually the EU's soft gummy sweets, marshmallows, and marzipan that have consistently evolved the market in new and exciting ways. European brands have led the charge in sustainable packaging and vegan-friendly alternatives, anticipating shifts in consumer demand long before these became mainstream requirements. One pioneering example is a Dutch chocolate producer that created its own fermented plant-based milk, allowing it to craft deliciously creamy, vegan chocolate products.

But innovation doesn't mean forgetting tradition. EU producers excel at striking the perfect balance between nostalgia and novelty. Across Europe, there's a strong heritage of confectionery-making that is deeply appreciated in the UK. German

marzipan is a fantastic illustration of this blend of tradition and quality, known widely beyond the common Christmas cake-topping. With its delicate almond flavour, this marzipan is intricately moulded into stunning fruit-shaped confections – each a tiny, edible piece of art that is as appealing visually as it is delicious.

Chocolate, too, carries a rich historical narrative across the EU, with each nation offering its distinct specialties. Belgian chocolates, renowned for their luxurious creaminess, sit alongside the remarkable **Cioccolato di Modica PGI** from Italy – the first chocolate to earn a PGI status. Crafted through manual grinding of cacao beans – a method introduced by the Spanish in the 16<sup>th</sup> century – this Sicilian delight maintains a distinctive grainy texture.

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Ultimately, the true power of European confectionery lies in its rich variety and ability to resonate with different tastes and preferences.



The EU's expertise in chocolate craftsmanship is especially evident during seasonal celebrations, with producers mastering the delicate art of creating beautifully moulded chocolate hollows. From intricately detailed chocolate Santas at Christmas to charming Easter rabbits, the craftsmanship and quality of these seasonal items consistently impress British consumers.

European confectionery also meets the growing demand for free-from products, successfully integrating vegan, sugar-free, and gluten-free offerings without compromising flavour.<sup>31</sup> This commitment ensures these options are every bit as indulgent and satisfying as traditional sweets, broadening their appeal and inclusivity.

In my consulting work, I regularly advise British confectionery businesses to explore the EU's rich variety of sweet creations. My experience leading food innovation and launching own-brand products has deepened my appreciation for how well European producers strike a balance between authenticity, innovation, and evolving market trends.

Ultimately, the true power of European confectionery lies in its rich variety and ability to resonate with different tastes and preferences. British consumers will always cherish familiar favourites but are increasingly open to innovative flavours and formats offered by our EU neighbours. The potential for discovery is vast, driven by producers who respect tradition while enthusiastically embracing the future. This combination ensures EU confectionery continues to sweeten and enrich British shelves – and palates – for years to come.





# Raising the Standard: How Europe is Setting the Bar for Quality Meat



**Rupert Claxton**

MEAT INDUSTRY ANALYST, GLOBAL MARKET STRATEGIST,  
AND ADVISOR TO THE EU'S 'MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK' CAMPAIGN

**In more than two decades of advising the meat and livestock sectors across Europe and Asia, I've seen how quality, traceability,<sup>32</sup> and sustainability<sup>33</sup> have become non-negotiables in the minds of today's meat consumers. EU meat producers have embraced these demands at every stage of the production chain – not as burdens, but as opportunities to lead globally in setting new standards. And for British buyers, that commitment translates directly into consistency, confidence, and flavour.**

Having worked extensively in global meat markets, I've seen how the EU's focus on food safety, animal welfare, and environmental responsibility has developed. The European Union has created a framework that not only ensures quality but actively supports sustainable farming systems.<sup>34</sup> These are not just box-ticking exercises – they're ingrained in the culture of production.

What sets EU meat apart is a combination of rigorous regulation and innovation. Whether we're talking about beef from Ireland, pork from Spain, or charcuterie from Italy, EU producers are driven by long-term thinking. They're preserving traditional methods while integrating cutting-edge technologies to improve efficiency, reduce emissions, and ensure animal welfare.

Take Iberian pork, for example. Its unique flavour comes from a combination of genetics, environment and centuries-old rearing practices, most notably the traditional 'montanera' system, where free-range pigs roam oak forests and feed on acorns during the final fattening stage. At the same time, producers are working to reduce environmental impact by introducing rotational grazing, feed optimisation, and better

waste management. Similarly, in France and Germany, poultry and veal producers are working under the strictest animal welfare protocols, while simultaneously developing new, low-impact farming models.

It's important to recognise that the UK, too, has exceptionally high meat production standards – some of the best in the world. However, when it comes to beef, domestic production alone cannot meet the total demand. There is a genuine need to import high-quality meat to bridge this gap, and EU producers are natural partners in that equation. Their systems align closely with British expectations, both in terms of standards and values.

British consumers are becoming more discerning. They want to know where their meat comes from, how it was raised, and whether it aligns with their values. The EU Quality Schemes, including the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), provide clear, credible answers. These labels don't just represent origin; they reflect centuries of tradition, regional know-how, and a deep respect for the land and livestock.



Holsteiner Katenschinken PGI, Germany



Prosciutto di Parma PDO, Italy



Kiełbasa lisiecka PGI, Poland

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In a world of competing claims and shifting standards, EU meat continues to stand out for its integrity, quality, and transparency.

For example, products such as **Kiełbasa Lisiecka PGI** sausage from Poland, **Holsteiner Katenschinken PGI** from Germany, and **Prosciutto di Parma PDO** from Italy showcase the authenticity and cultural heritage that these schemes protect.

EU meats are also standing out in the foodservice sector. Restaurants and chefs are increasingly seeking provenance, not just protein. They want meats that offer unique flavour profiles, regional identities, and ethical sourcing. From dry-aged Galician beef to Corsican charcuterie, EU meat delivers on both quality and story – ingredients essential to today's dining experience. Scandinavia and Poland are also becoming increasingly popular for UK restaurants seeking out new ingredients.

Looking to the future, sustainability remains the key challenge and opportunity. What I find encouraging is the EU's willingness to engage with the issue proactively. There's a recognition that the industry must not only feed people but also help safeguard the planet. That means fewer antibiotics, better land use, lower carbon footprints, and a stronger link between producer and consumer.

In a world of competing claims and shifting standards, EU meat continues to stand out for its integrity, quality and transparency. For the UK market, it offers not only a reliable, responsible source of premium meat but also a strategic solution to supply challenges, and a partner that shares our commitment to high standards and sustainable practices. That's why I continue to champion it – not just as an expert, but as a believer in the future of sustainable, delicious food.





## Beyond the Pint Glass: Unlocking Europe's Brewing Brilliance



Mark Dredge

BEER WRITER, EDUCATOR,  
AND ADVISOR TO THE EU'S 'MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK' CAMPAIGN

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I've spent my career exploring the world of beer – writing, judging, educating, and sharing the incredible diversity of styles, flavours, and stories that define this drink. What continues to impress me, year after year, is just how rich and rewarding Europe's beer landscape is – not only in heritage but in innovation, quality, and variety. As someone who works closely with the brewing industry and as Advisor for the EU's More Than Only Food & Drink campaign, I believe European beer offers remarkable, and still largely untapped, opportunities for the UK market.

British consumers are some of the most adventurous drinkers in the world. We're curious. We travel. And when we do, we seek out flavour. Many of us associate European countries like Germany, Belgium, and Czechia with exceptional beer – those crisp Pilsners in Prague, robust Trappist ales in Belgium, or rich, malty **Bayerisches Bier PGI** from Bavaria. But the truth is, there's a whole world of lesser-known EU brews that UK pubs, bars, and retailers have yet to fully embrace – and that's a huge opportunity.

Europe's brewing legacy is extraordinary. These beers aren't just products – they're expressions of place, culture, and time-honoured technique. Many are brewed to the same recipes and standards that have been passed down through generations, using local ingredients and traditional methods. Yet, at the same time, EU brewers aren't afraid to push boundaries. Across the continent, you'll find sour beers infused with local fruits, oak-aged lagers, bold double IPAs, and refined farmhouse ales that could stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the finest wines.

From a UK perspective, this variety is gold dust. Operators and buyers are constantly looking for ways to excite their customers – to bring something new, something with a story. Whether it's a dark, velvety stout from Ireland brewed with ancient grain recipes, a spritzy blonde ale from the Baltic, or a complex smoked beer from Germany that pairs perfectly with grilled meats, EU beers have the potential to surprise and delight British drinkers.

The key is confidence – both for the operator and the consumer. For venues, investing in beer knowledge and training makes a huge difference. Staff who can ask, "Do you like something hoppy, sour, or malty?" can guide customers toward beers they'll genuinely enjoy, rather than defaulting to what's familiar. Offering smaller pours – like one-third pints – allows guests to explore without commitment, much like they might sample wines or cocktails.



Žatecký chmel PDO, Czechia

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British drinkers are ready for more flavour and more variety. European beer can deliver all of that and more.

Food pairing is another area brimming with potential. Beer and food are natural companions – more so than many people realise. A Czech style lager, such as **Žatecký chmel PDO**, with fish and chips, a Belgian Tripel with roast chicken, or a cherry lambic with dark chocolate pudding – these are pairings that elevate both the dish and the drink. And with EU beers, there's a real story behind each pairing, grounded in regional culinary tradition.

As a judge at international beer competitions, I've seen the breadth and quality of EU beers firsthand – and I know how rare many of these are on UK shelves. For consumers who value sustainability, authenticity, and craft, these beers tick every box. They're not just drinks; they're cultural artefacts – bottled stories that deserve a place on our menus, in our cellars, and at our tables.

Ultimately, I believe the future of beer in the UK lies in discovery. British drinkers are ready for more – more flavour, more variety, more meaning. European beer can deliver all of that and more. I'm excited to keep championing these incredible brews and helping the UK beer scene tap into their full potential.





# Distilled Stories: Why EU Spirits Belong in Every UK Bar

Kristiane Westray

SPIRITS WRITER, JUDGE,  
AND ADVISOR TO THE EU'S 'MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK' CAMPAIGN

Spirits have always held a unique place in the world of flavour – layered, nuanced, and steeped in tradition. Nowhere is this truer than in Europe. From smoky Calvados and vibrant herbal liqueurs to the clean, crystalline complexity of Polish vodka, EU spirits carry with them the weight of heritage, the excitement of innovation, and an authenticity that today's consumers crave. As a whisky writer and spirits educator who has tasted thousands of samples across Europe and beyond, I believe that European spirits are among the most exciting and versatile in the world – and they're ripe for wider appreciation here in the UK.

What sets EU spirits apart isn't just their quality, though that is world-class. It's their sense of place. Through centuries of distillation, experimentation, and regulation, the EU has developed a system – notably through its Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) and Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) – that ensures regional identity and artisanal technique are more than marketing buzzwords. These labels guarantee origin, process, and provenance. When you pour a **Swedish Aquavit PGI**, an **Irish Whiskey PGI** or an **Original Lithuanian vodka PGI**, you're pouring a piece of history.

And yet, EU spirits are anything but stuck in the past. Today's producers – from Portugal to Poland, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean – are taking that deep-rooted legacy and transforming it. For example, distilleries in Spain are infusing their gins with local citrus fruits and wild herbs. A new wave

of brand-makers are introducing French **Armagnac PGI** to a new generation of drinkers. There's excitement building across the continent as a new generation of UK consumers discover the sheer flavour spectrum on offer.

The recent resurgence in aperitif culture is a great example. Once confined to sunny squares in Italy or France, the spritz is now a UK staple. But behind that trend lies something deeper – a move towards mindful, occasion-based drinking that favours lower Alcohol by Volume (ABV) options, sophisticated flavour profiles, and social connection. EU producers are uniquely positioned to meet this demand with vibrant amaro, botanical vermouths, and complex herbal liqueurs. These are spirits designed not just to be drunk, but to be savoured – layered, bitter-sweet, and endlessly pairable.



Swedish Aquavit PGI, Sweden



Armagnac PGI, France



Irish Whiskey PGI, Ireland

“UK bartenders, retailers and restaurateurs looking to elevate their drinks offering should look to Europe. Not only do these spirits stand up in terms of quality – they also offer immense versatility.”

There's a similar story unfolding in the world of low and no alcohol. European producers have embraced the challenge, creating 0% options that retain the complexity of traditional spirits. Using distillation, maceration, and the same time-honoured ingredients as their alcoholic counterparts, they're making alternatives that work brilliantly in cocktails – or as standalone serves.

Another movement shaping the spirits world is hyper-localisation. Small-scale EU producers are increasingly turning to local grains, fruits, and botanicals to tell stories that are uniquely their own. These choices often reduce environmental impact, but just as importantly, they showcase regional diversity in flavour. A **Genever PGI** made with Dutch rye and indigenous herbs tells a very different story to a **Bayerischer Kräuterlikör PGI** from Germany infused with alpine botanicals – and both are equally deserving of a place on the UK backbar.

UK bartenders, retailers, and restaurateurs looking to elevate their drinks offering should look to Europe. Not only do these spirits stand up in terms of quality – they also offer immense versatility. From the classic VSOP **Cognac PGI** in a stirred-down Old Fashioned to a **Calvados PGI** Highball that sings with apple brightness, or a rye-heavy **Polish Vodka PGI** Martini with elegant spice, these spirits can transform menus and deepen customer engagement.





## Unlocking the Potential of EU Food & Drink in the UK

Throughout this book, we have explored the remarkable breadth and depth of the European Union's food and drink sector, highlighting its rich traditions, exceptional quality, and commitment to innovation. The EU boasts a rich array of products – a mix of celebrated delicacies and hidden treasures – that meet the evolving tastes of UK consumers.

For UK businesses, the opportunity to source from the EU is more than a matter of variety – it's an investment in quality, authenticity, and reliability. The EU's rigorous food safety and quality standards ensure that every product, whether a heritage cheese, a fine wine, or an innovative plant-based offering, meets the highest benchmarks for excellence. PDOs and PGIs, and organic certifications further enhance consumer trust, reinforcing the value of these products in an increasingly discerning marketplace.

The UK food and beverage sector is undergoing rapid transformation, shaped by changing consumer preferences, heightened interest in sustainability, and a growing demand for

authentic and premium-quality offerings. EU producers are ideally positioned to meet these demands. From sustainable farming practices and eco-friendly packaging innovations to the preservation of traditional production methods, EU food and drink are at the forefront of a movement that prioritises both quality and responsibility. What's more, with its Vision for Agriculture and Food,<sup>35</sup> the European Commission aims to build a stronger, more sustainable food system that benefits both farmers and consumers.

For UK retailers, food service providers, and distributors, the benefits of integrating EU products into their portfolios are clear:

### DIVERSITY AND DISTINCTION:

The EU's vast array of regional specialties allows businesses to offer consumers unique, story-rich products that stand out in a competitive marketplace. Whether it is a PDO cheese from the Alps, a small-batch spirit from the Baltics, or an artisanal chocolate from Belgium, these products bring added value and exclusivity to the UK market.

### TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY:

European food regulations provide a guarantee of safety, authenticity, and traceability, reinforcing consumer confidence in the provenance and integrity of these products. For businesses, this means being able to offer products that align with the growing consumer demand for transparency in food sourcing.

### SUSTAINABILITY AND ETHICAL SOURCING:

With the EU's strong commitment to sustainable agriculture, organic production, and reduced environmental impact, sourcing from European producers allows UK businesses to align with sustainability goals and appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.

### ALIGNMENT WITH UK CONSUMER TRENDS:

The UK market continues to embrace new and exciting flavours, premium-quality ingredients, and ethically produced food and beverages. The EU's focus on both tradition and innovation ensures that its products meet the expectations of today's food-savvy consumers, from heritage wines and craft beers to dairy alternatives and gourmet plant-based options.

The 'More than Only Food & Drink' UK campaign has sought to shine a light on the untapped potential of EU products in the UK, fostering new business relationships and encouraging the discovery of exceptional European food and beverages. The producer profiles, product spotlights, and expert insights featured in this book provide a gateway to exciting opportunities, whether you're a wholesaler looking for high-quality imports, a retailer aiming to differentiate your offerings, or a chef seeking authentic ingredients to elevate your menu.

As you turn the final pages of this book, we invite you to take the next step: explore, taste, and experience the best of what the EU has to offer. Exploring new suppliers, introducing

European specialties into your business, and sharing the rich stories behind these products all open the door to a world of discovery and boundless possibility in EU food and drink.

Now is the time to embrace the wealth of opportunity that European food and drink bring to the UK market. By doing so, you will not only enrich your offerings but also connect your customers with the exceptional quality, tradition, and innovation that define the EU's culinary landscape.

The future of food is diverse, sustainable, and full of flavour – and EU products are at the heart of it.



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Christophe Hansen  
European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food







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